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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Sabotage? Mob vandalises WB hospital

Mob ransacks emergency ward, OPD & beats up patients; evidence tampering alleged

Damaged medical equipments in the emergency room after unidentified miscreants vandalised a portion of the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital amid midnight protests by women in West Bengal against the rape and murder of a post graduate trainee doctor, in Kolkata **PHOTOS: PTI/ SCREENGRAB**

KOLKATA, 15 AUG

Shortly after midnight on Friday, a large group of miscreants entered the State-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, vandalising parts of the facility, during the 'Reclaim the Night' protest. Eyewitnesses claim that the mob had come to tamper evidence.

According to the police, nearly 40 people, masquerading as protesters, entered the hospital premises, vandalised property, beat up patients and pelted the police personnel present with stones, prompting the force to burst tear gas shells to disperse the crowd.

The Kolkata police has arrested nine people so far.

The miscreants carrying sticks, bricks and rods, vandalised the Emergency ward, its nursing station and medicine store, besides a section of the Out Patients Department (OPD) at the hospital in north Kolkata, police said. Several CCTV cameras in and around the area were destroyed by the vandals who also ransacked a stage where the junior doctors have been demonstrating since 9 August following the death of the physician. A police vehicle was overturned and several two-wheelers parked there were also damaged in the incident, and some police officers suffered injuries.

Leader of the Opposition in Bengal Suvendu Adhikari of BJP on wrote to the Centre, seeking security by paramilitary forces at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. In his letter to the Union home secretary, Adhikari said it was the duty of the police to protect the crime scene and provide security to the people working and patients being treated at the hospital, but they "miserably failed". Meanwhile, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accused Opposition parties of being behind the vandalism. Banerjee said she does not hold the students or doctors responsible for their protests and instead, she accused certain political parties of attempting to incite trouble.

A resident doctors' association Federation of Resident Doctors' Associations (FORDA) announced to continue its protest, a day after medics slammed it for calling off the agitation following the health ministry's "verbal" assurance to meet its demands, including bringing a law to curb attacks on medical personnel. FORDA members met Union Health Minister JP Nadda on Tuesday night and submitted a letter of demands, that included bringing a central law to curb attacks on medical personnel. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 4 & 5

U'khand nurse enroute home raped & murdered

KOLKATA, 15 AUG

When the entire country reels from the rape and murder of a woman doctor in Kolkata, Uttarakhand police on Thursday arrested a suspect in the alleged rape and murder of a nurse who had been missing for two weeks in Udham Singh Nagar district.

The preliminary investigation revealed that the accused, Dharmendra, a daily wage labourer, assaulted the victim and murdered her while she was going home after duty on 30 July. Her sister filed a missing report on 31 July and police found her body in an empty plot in Dibdiba, Uttar Pradesh. The body was subsequently sent for post-mortem examination. According to media reports, police identified the suspect by reviewing the CCTV footage. During interrogation, Dharmendra said that he attacked the nurse with the intent to rob her. But, he raped and strangled her before fleeing with her jewellery and cash, police said. However, police tracked the victim's mobile and found Dharmendra's location. Police have also recovered the clothes Dharmendra was wearing at the time of the incident.

- Police identified the suspect by reviewing the CCTV footage. During interrogation, Dharmendra said that he attacked the nurse with the intent to rob her.

The deceased hails from Islamnagar in Gadarpur and worked as a nurse in Naintal. She lived with her 11-year-old daughter in Bilaspur Colony.

Bihar girl kidnapped, raped and killed

Six people have been booked for gangrape and murder after the maimed body of a Dalit teenager was found in Bihar's Muzaffarpur.

The girl's mother accused a man Sanjay Rai and his associates of forcing their way into her home on 11 August abducting the daughter. The parents found the body by a pond in the village on Tuesday.

—Salar News

DK Shivakumar **PHOTO: PTI**

DKS TO CONTEST CHANNAPATNA ASSEMBLY BYPOLL

BENGALURU, 15 AUG

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday said that he is the Congress candidate for Channapatna Assembly bypoll.

Earlier too, Shivakumar had said that he is the candidate, irrespective of whoever contests from the party.

Shivakumar participated in the Independence Day celebrations and hoisted the national flag in the bypoll bound Channapatna for the first time today. He is neither the MLA representing Channapatna nor the in-charge Minister of Ramanagara district, which was recently renamed as Bengaluru South, under which Channapatna taluk comes. Later in the day, replying to reporters' question in Nelamangala on the city outskirts as to who will be the Congress candidate from Channapatna, he said, "I'm the candidate." He did not elaborate further. Shivakumar currently represents the neighbouring Kanakapura segment.

Channapatna bypoll is necessitated as the seat fell vacant following the election of its representative -- JD(S) leader and now Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy -- to Lok Sabha in the recent elections. Though there were talks earlier that Shivakumar's brother and former MP DK Sureshmay be fielded in Channapatna, speculations were rife in the political circles, that Shivakumar may himself enter the fray to avenge his brother's defeat and to re-establish his clout in the region.

—PTI

CALLS FOR 1 NATION, 1 ELECTION

PM pushes for 'secular civil code' in I-Day speech

Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets the gathering at the Red Fort on 78th Independence Day, in New Delhi, on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

In his first Independence Day address of his third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday made an unequivocal pitch for a "secular" civil code instead of the current framework which is "communal" and promoted "discrimination", and also for simultaneous polls, as he fronted the ruling BJP's manifesto promises for a uniform civil code and 'one nation one election'.

Modi delivered his longest Independence Day speech at 98 minutes ON Thursday.

Onthe unrest in Bangladesh, he said 140 crore Indians are concerned over the safety of Hindus and other minorities in the neighbouring country.

India has always wished peace, happiness and prosperity for Bangladesh and wants its development journey to continue, said Modi, who sported a multi-coloured Rajasthani leheriya print turban with a white kurta and churidar.

While hailing the rise of women in every sector, he also expressed deep concern over incidents of crimes against them, amid an outrage over the recent rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata. He asked state governments to move with "utmost urgency" to ensure swift justice in such cases. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

WHAT DID THE PM SAY?

- Our 140-crore people want the Hindus of Bangladesh, the minorities there, to be safe. We want our neighbouring countries to tread the path of peace and happiness.
- Our women are being tortured. There must be quick investigation and punishment against those who abuse women.
- It is need of the hour to have a secular civil code and do away with discriminatory communal civil code
- Frequent elections create obstacles in a country's progress. Request everyone to come together for 'one nation, one election
- In the next 5 years, 75,000 new seats will be created in medical colleges in India

Guarantee schemes will continue: CM

BENGALURU, 15 AUG

CM Siddaramaiah during the 78th Independence Day celebration, at City's Manekshaw Parade Ground, on Thursday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Amid pressure from the ruling Congress to do a "rethink" on the ambitious five guarantees schemes, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday asserted that it will continue and highlighted "Karnataka model" of development with focus on social justice and economic equality, thereby contributing to nation-building.

Accusing the Centre of 'deviating' from the principle of the federal system, leading to discrimination in the allocation of funds to states, he urged it to understand that the nation can develop only if states are developed and release a fair amount of grants for their development. In a democratic system, the Opposition parties are expected to function responsibly in tandem with the principles of the Constitution, by respecting the mandate given by the people of the state, the Chief Siddaramaiah said Karnataka stands third in the country by drawing Rs 54,427 crore Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) during 2023-24. He said MoUs (memorandum of understanding) have been signed with 13 industries, which will bring in investments worth Rs 42,915 crore and is expected to create around 22,600 jobs. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

RINGS OF FIRE

Shwet Ashwa of Indian military police performs a stunt during Independence Day celebration, at City's Manekshaw Parade Ground, on Thursday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

A PROGRESSIVE STEP

Odisha women get 1-day menstrual leave

BHUBANESWAR, 15 AUG

Odisha's Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida on Thursday announced a day's paid menstrual leave for State government and private sector employees.

The leave, however, will be optional. Parida, who is also in charge of the women and child development department, made the announcement after attending an Independence Day programme in Cuttack. The women employees can take the leave on the first or second day of the menstrual cycle. "It will be optional," she said.

Odisha's Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida made the announcement on Thursday **PHOTO: X/@PRAVATIPODISHA**

An Odia girl had raised her voice seeking paid leave during periods at the United Nations Civil Society Conference 2024 held in Nairobi, Kenya. Ranjita Priyadarshini, a woman activist from Odisha, had also drawn the attention of all the delegates at the international conference regarding paid leave for women during menstruation. She argued that women across the world suffer due to physical pain during their menstruation. *—PTI*

- An Odia girl had raised her voice seeking paid leave during periods at the United Nations Civil Society Conference 2024 held in Nairobi, Kenya.

WHO DECLARES MPOX OUTBREAK A GLOBAL HEALTH EMERGENCY

LONDON, 15 AUG

The World Health Organisation has declared the mpox outbreaks in Congo and elsewhere in Africa a global emergency, with cases confirmed among children and adults in more than a dozen countries and a new form of the virus spreading. Few vaccine doses are available on the continent. Earlier this week, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention announced that the mpox outbreaks were a public health emergency, with more than 500 deaths, and called for international help to stop the virus' spread.

PHOTO: PTI

"This is something that should concern us all...The potential for further spread within Africa and beyond is very worrying," said WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

The Africa CDC previously said mpox, also known as monkeypox, has been detected in 13 countries this year, and more than 96 per cent of all cases and deaths are in Congo. Cases are up 160 per cent and deaths are up 19 per cent compared with the same period last year. So far, there have been more than 14,000 cases and 524 people have died. In 2022, WHO declared mpox to be a global emergency after it spread to more than 70 countries that had not previously reported mpox, mostly affecting gay and bisexual men. In that outbreak, fewer than 1 per cent of people died. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 4 & 5

Miscreants barge into Kolar woman's home, kill her

KOLAR, 15 AUG

A middle-aged woman was murdered by miscreants at her home in Mulbagal, Kolar, on Wednesday. The victim, Divyashree, 46, an assistant teacher at a government school in Mudiyanoor, was attacked around 8pm at her residence in Muthyalapet. According to reports, the miscreants barged into her house during a power outage. Divyashree was at home with her daughter, Nisha, when the assailants barged in. The perpetrators attacked Divyashree, slitting her throat with a sharp weapon. Nisha, who was present during the attack, managed to escape and lock herself in a room. The victim's husband, Padmanabh, a businessman, was away from home. Known for his friendly nature, he had no known enemies, according to neighbours. Nisha, who is pursuing a BE course at Reva University in Bengaluru, has stated in her complaint that three to four unidentified individuals entered their house and attacked her mother without any provocation.

—Salar News

State to honour INC Belagavi session centenaries

BENGALURU, 15 AUG

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday said his government will take all necessary measures to commemorate the centenaries of the Belagavi session of the Indian National Congress and the establishment of the "Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha" by BR Ambedker, this year in a memorable and meaningful way. The 39th session of the Indian National Congress held at Belagavi in 1924 was the only Congress session presided over by Mahatma Gandhi.Noting that Gandhiji in his presidential address to the session had stressed upon the religious harmony and cordial relationship between the people speaking different languages, the Chief Minister said he spoke about the measures to be taken for the welfare of the downtrodden. "In these toxic times, when the world is boiling over with hatred and intolerance, Gandhiji's words hold more significance than ever before," he said.

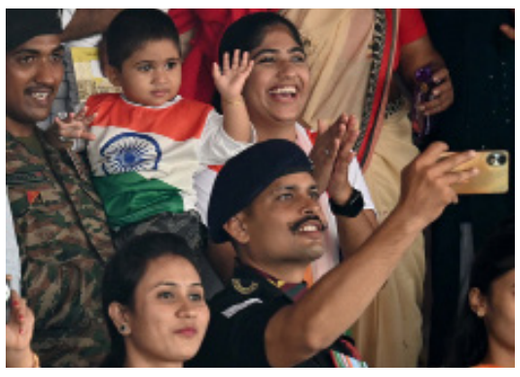
—Salar News

Minister launches buses to Outer Ring Road layouts

MYSURU, 15 AUG

District Minister HC Mahadevappa on Thursday launched 14 City bus services to localities around Outer Ring Road. As the per KSRTC city division, these buses operates daily in four different routes such as like Route 1: City Bus Stand (CBS)-Nanjumalige-Parasaiahanahundi-Dattagalli-Bogadi-Hinakal-Kalamandir-Metropole Circle-CBS. Route 2: CBS-Metropole Circle-Kalamandir-Hinakal-Bharath Cancer Hospital-Manipal Hospital-LIC Circle-Highway Circle-CBS.

—Salar News



A jawan's family enjoys cultural events during the 78th Independence Day celebration at Manekshaw Parade Ground, in Bengaluru on Thursday; Students perform during the celebration; An army official performs 'Mallakhamb'; Parachute Regiment personnel display their skills

PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD

On I-Day, women get more schemes

Women will be organised into 'Stree Shakti' SHGs to generate income

BENGALURU, 15 AUG

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has announced new welfare initiatives aimed at empowering women in Karnataka, extending the scope of the State's social welfare programmes beyond the existing five guarantees.

During his Independence Day speech at Manekshaw Parade Grounds in Bengaluru on Thursday, Siddaramaiah said women will be organised into 'Stree Shakti' self-help groups, encouraging them to engage in income-generating activities. The government will allot Rs 1,642 crore to provide them interest subsidies for loans from cooperative institutions.

Siddaramaiah said, "The government has spent Rs 13.03 crore for vulnerable groups." Around 78.64 lakh beneficiaries from vulnerable groups are receiving pensions through Direct Benefit Transfer. He also announced an increase in the pension under Maithri scheme.

Quoting poet Kuvempu, Siddaramaiah called upon to uphold the values of secularism, scientific temperament and social and economic freedom for all. Siddaramaiah said, "Despite delays, we believed in helping people and took steps to provide relief to those affected, disbursing Rs 636.45 crore as interim relief and a total input subsidy of Rs 3.45 crore to over 38 lakh farmers who suffered crop losses."

The Chief Minister also highlighted efforts to promote entrepreneurship in the agriculture sector through Krishi Navodyama scheme, which has supported 40 agri-startups. A Skill Advisory Committee has been established to align training programmes with industry needs, particularly in the IT and BT sectors.

The Chief Minister said the government has transferred Rs 1,822 crore as incentive to milk producers and also covered Rs 20.02 crore expenses to provide free electricity for irrigation pump sets. Looking ahead, Siddaramaiah mentioned the upcoming Global Investors' Meet in February 2024, and the draft of the Karnataka Clean Mobility Policy 2024-29 aims to attract Rs 50,000 crore in investments and create around one lakh new jobs in the clean mobility sector. In terms of infrastructure development, Siddaramaiah outlined plans for the construction of 1,917km of State highways, 2,502km of district main roads and 150 bridges within the year.

The 'Brand Bengaluru' concept aims to transform Bengaluru into a world-class city with a long-term infrastructure development plan worth Rs 48,686 crore.

—Salar News

A man waves the Indian National Flag in front of Vidhana Soudha during the 78th Independence Day celebrations in Bengaluru on Thursday

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

₹100 cr to address landslides in Western Ghats

During the his speech at 78th Independence Day celebrations at Manekshaw Parade Grounds in Bengaluru on Thursday, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said, "The State government has identified landslide-prone areas in Karnataka. An initiative will be undertaken in collaboration with Geological Survey of India and National Institute of Rock Mechanics to mitigate the risks posed by landslides, particularly in 1,351 villages across 250 gram panchayats Chikkamagaluru, Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Kodagu, Shivamogga and Hassan.

—Salar News

'Shwet Ashwa' officers perform during the 78th Independence Day celebration, in Bengaluru on Thursday

PHOTO: PTI

Governor lauds Congress govt's five guarantee schemes

BENGALURU, 15 AUG

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Thursday heaped praise on the State government's five guarantee schemes and said they are designed to empower women, support the poor and assist unemployed youth.Cautioning against the serious challenge of environmental imbalance, he stressed on the shared responsibility to protect and enhance the environment. Amid pressure from within the ruling Congress to do a "rethink" on the ambitious five guarantees schemes, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday asserted that they will continue.

Gehlot today hoisted the national flag at the Raj Bhavan on the occasion of 78th Independence Day celebrations, his office said.

—PTI

SBI, PNB in talks with govt for resolution on ban

BENGALURU, 15 AUG

Hit by the surprising decision of the State government to stop all transactions with them, State Bank of India and Punjab National Bank on Thursday said they are engaged with the state for an "amicable resolution" on the matter.

In the first official comments after the decision, the State-run lenders issued separate statements, saying the matter at the root of the problem is subjudice.

SBI's peer Punjab National Bank, also had a similar statement and pointed out that it will not be prudent to offer a specific comment on the matter.

"'The Bank is committed for an amicable resolution of the matter and is in discussion with Government of Karnataka," the PNB statement said.

Karnataka government ordered all its departments, boards, corporations, public sector units and universities to withdraw all their deposits and investments in the State Bank of India and the Punjab National Bank and stop any business with these institutions on August 12. The order was reported on 14 August.

The order came after the denial to redeem Rs 12 crore deposited by the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) following a scam involving bank employees.

A state government said the meeting with the bank officials did not yield any result and the matter is now sub judice.

Similarly, Rs 10 crore deposited by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) was not returned by the bank owing to a scam by the bank officials, the circular said.

The ban by one of the most prosperous states in the country comes at a time when the banking system is reeling under a "war for deposits" where challenges on liability accretion dominate all discussions.

—PTI

Bengaluru witnesses candlelight march and revelry on I-Day

BENGALURU, 15 AUG

- On Independence Day on Thursday, Bengaluru experienced a dichotomy of celebrations. As the clock struck midnight, the City resonated with both a poignant protest and a festive revelry.

On Independence Day on Thursday, Bengaluru experienced a dichotomy of celebrations. As the clock struck midnight, the City resonated with both a poignant protest and a festive revelry. At Cubbon Park, a candlelight march titled 'Reclaim the Night' brought together around 25 women to show solidarity with the 31-year-old woman post-graduate trainee, who was raped and murdered at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata on 9 August. Speaking to Salar News, Ankita (name changed) expressed their frustration over the ongoing restrictions faced by women and the lack of progress in securing their rights. "We gathered here to express our feelings and frustration when we have our right to move freely."

The protest, however, faced an abrupt end when police intervened, leading to a sense of disillusionment among the protesters. Similarly, a resident complex in Whitefield held a candlelight march, drawing over 100 participants who gathered to express solidarity and demand justice.

Bengaluru also saw a host of other celebrations. The flag hoisting by civil society organisations and citizens was held at RBANMS Grounds. Citizen groups such as Bahutva Karnataka, Bee Culture, People's Union for Civil Liberties and Constitutional Observer began celebrations at 5pm on 14 August here. It ended at 1am with the hoisting of the flag and singing of the national anthem at midnight by around 1,000 people.

Similarly, a group of residents from Silk Board planted around 5,000 tree saplings to mark their Independence Day. UIDAI regional office in Bengaluru organized a Child Aadhaar Enrolment Camp at Anganwadi centres at Yelahanka.

Another key highlight of the day was the return of Freedom Jam, a music event held at Bangalore International Centre in Domlur, after 26 years.

—Salar News

Metro breaks ridership record on Independence Day

BENGALURU, 15 AUG

Namma Metro recorded its highest-ever daily passenger footfall of 9,17,365 on Independence Day. The Purple Line, connecting Challaghatta to Kadugodi, carried the maximum load of 4.43 lakh commuters, while the Green Line, running from Silk Institute to Nagasandra, ferried 3.01 lakh passengers. The Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Interchange Station at Majestic, the city's central hub, recorded a footfall of 1.72 lakh. A BMRCL official attributed the record-breaking ridership to the long weekend and the Independence Day flower show at Lalbagh, which drew massive crowds. The previous highest ridership for the Bengaluru Metro was recorded on 6 August, at 8.65 lakh passengers. However, Tumakuru Road, Mysuru Road, and Hosur Road in the City witness heavy jam.

—Salar News

RS 542 CRORE

Mysuru railway earns record freight revenue

MYSURU, 15 AUG

South Western Railway Mysuru Divisional Manager Shilpi Agarwal on Thursday said Mysuru division has generated Rs 542.39 crore through freight loading of 6.7 million tonnes over the last one year.

She was speaking after hoisting the national flag at Railway Sports Grounds here on the 78th Independence Day.

Agarwal said the division also saw a 6.2 per cent improvement in Net Tonne Kilometres, reaching 1,595.7 million. Gross Tonne Kilometres saw a 2.2% increase, reaching 2,673 million. The division exported 19 rakes of iron ore and it earned Rs 57.06 crore.

On the passenger services front, the division carried 19.02 million passengers. It generated a revenue of Rs 242.89 crores.

To accommodate the demand of rail users and clear extra rush of passengers, she said the division has also operated 52 temporary and 23 permanent coaches. A total of 59 special trains were run in the division, she said.

PHOTO: PTI

Agarwal said the foundation stones were laid for redeveloping 15 stations under Amrit Bharat Stations Scheme with a total investment of Rs 385 crore. Additionally, the division made significant strides in advancing electrification, commissioning two Traction Substations at Ramagiri and Mandagere in Mysuru-Hassan section. The division also raised the sectional speed to 110 kmph across 135.90 km. Track renewal and welding projects were also completed, enhancing overall safety and efficiency. 24 major projects have been sanctioned for Rs 110 crore to improve facilities at stations.

—Salar News

Find my husband: Woman appeals on social media

BENGALURU, 15 AUG

A woman in Bengaluru has taken to social media in a desperate attempt to find her techie husband, who has been untraceable since 4 August.

Sreeparna Dutta, wife of 37-year-old Vipin Gupta, a software professional hailing from Lucknow, has sought help from all quarters in locating her husband.

Speaking to Salar News on Wednesday, Dutta said: "Despite filing an FIR, there has been minimal progress in the case. Police told me that Vipin was last seen near Kodigehalli at 12.42pm on 4 August. From there, CCTVs in nearby locations were not functioning".

She said: "Vipin was wearing a beige jacket and dark grey track pants, and was on his green Kawasaki Ninja motorcycle. He has left his laptop at home and his mobile phone remains switched off. I am surprised that Rs.1.8 lakh was withdrawn from his account after he disappeared."

She said police confirmed to her that Gupta had not left the country and CCTV footage from bus and railway stations have also proven that he has not travelled or logged in from anywhere.

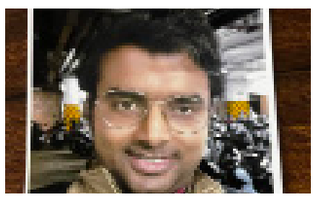


PHOTO: SALAR

- A woman in Bengaluru has taken to social media in a desperate attempt to find her techie husband, who has been untraceable since 4 August

According to sources close to the family, as soon as police investigations began, Dutta received three calls. One of the calls, which lasted less than a minute, gave a location and demanded a ransom for releasing Gupta. The second call increased the ransom amount. Dutta has also received threatening messages on her mobile phone and her social media handle.

—Salar News

State focuses on empowering poor, women: Minister

MYSURU, 15 AUG

Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa has said Karnataka model of implementation of poll guarantees schemes not only aims at empowerment of poor, weaker sections, middle classes but also focusses on women-led development which is possible only when they get freedom to implement their choices.

The Mysuru district in-charge minister was speaking after hoisting the National Flag, receiving guard of honour at 78th Independence Day celebrations held at Bannimantap Torch Light Parade Grounds in the city on Thursday.

The minister said the government will complete constructing Dr BR Ambedkar Bhavan in the heart of the city by the end of this year using Rs 19 crore of MUDA.

The minister said district administration has selected 2,310 beneficiaries for construction of houses under Basava Housing scheme and will built 2,509 houses under Dr BR Ambedkar Housing scheme.

—Salar News

BJP, RSS asked me to stay silent over rift, says Yatnal

VIJAYAPURA, 15 AUG

Senior BJP leader and MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, who has been vocal in his criticism of the State unit of the party and its leadership, on Thursday said that the party's National President JP Nadda and RSS seniors have sent him a message asking to remain silent for some time, and assured him that they will resolve the issues raised by him.

The Vijayapura MLA has been openly critical of state BJP President BY Vijayendra, accusing him of indulging in "adjustment politics" with the ruling Congress, and trying to keep the party in his clutches, along with his father BS Yediyurappa, a party veteran and

Yanal and a group of BJP leaders who are said to be disgruntled with Vijayendra and Yediyurappa "controlling the state unit", have planned to take out a 'padayatra' (foot march) to highlight the 'Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribe Development Corporation' scam and the diversion of funds meant for the welfare of the SC/STs to guarantee schemes allegedly by the Congress government.

Basanagouda Patil Yatnal

PHOTO: PTI

This plans comes close on the heels of a week-long protest march from Bengaluru to Mysuru, by the combined opposition of BJP and JD(S), under Vijayendra's leadership which concluded on 10 August. That march demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over the MUDA site allotment 'scam'.

Some of these "like minded" leaders of the party had held a meeting at a resort near the district headquarters town of Belagavi recently under the leadership of Yatnal and senior MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi, during which they planned a foot march from Kudalasangama to Ballari.

—PTI

PHOTO: PTI

T'gana in talks with World Bank over loans: Revanth

HYDERABAD, 15 AUG

In a veiled attack on the previous Bharat Rashtra Samithi regime, Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Thursday said his government would not make the mistake of borrowing funds with higher interest rates and impose a heavy burden on people, even as he highlighted his vision to develop Telangana as the 'future State'. In his Independence Day address after hoisting the National Flag at the historic Golconda Fort here, the Chief Minister said the government is already making efforts to restructure the State debts and he met with the World Bank President during his recent visit to the US. "The total State debt at the time of formation of Telangana was Rs 75,577 crore and it has increased to Rs 7 lakh crore in December last year. The government released a white paper on State finances and also committed to revitalising the State economy." *—PTI*

Army pays solemn tribute to officer killed in J&K

JAMMU, 15 AUG

A wreath-laying ceremony was held in Jammu to pay tribute to Captain Deepak Singh of the Indian Army, who was killed in an encounter with terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday. In a solemn wreath-laying ceremony, Lt Gen Navin Sachdeva, GOC White Knight Corps laid a wreath to pay homage to Capt Deepak Singh who made the supreme sacrifice in the highest traditions of the Indian Army. Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar and Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Anand Jain, present on the occasion, also paid their respects and tribute to the killed soldier. Capt Deepak Singh was killed in action during an encounter with terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district on Wednesday. *—ANI*

Prabhat is new J&K Spl DGP, to take charge on 30 Sept

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

Highly decorated IPS officer Nalin Prabhat has been appointed as Special Director General of the Jammu and Kashmir Police effective immediately and will assume the role of the force's chief following the retirement of RR Swain on 30 September. The Ministry of Home Affairs issued an order confirming Prabhat's appointment, stating that he would take charge after Swain's departure. Prabhat has a distinguished career marked by multiple accolades, including three Police Gallantry Medals and the Parakram Padak. At 55 years old, Prabhat has an extensive background in counter-insurgency operations, having previously led the Greyhounds, a highly specialised anti-Naxal unit, in Andhra Pradesh. His experience includes significant roles within the Central Reserve Police Force where he served as Inspector General of Operations and Additional Director General in Kashmir region. *—PTI*

PM failed to address major issues: Oppn

Congress says PM refrained from speaking on allegations raised by Hindenburg

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

Opposition leaders on Thursday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his Independence Day speech, alleging that it failed to unite and inspire people or address important issues faced by the nation.

Communist Party of India General Secretary D Raja said the prime minister's speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort on India's 78th Independence Day did not place any issue before the nation to unite and inspire people.

"Whatever he spoke is in line with the sinister, divisive agenda of RSS," Raja said.

The CPI leader said that among other things, Modi did not speak on what would be done about the allegations made in the report of Hindenburg Research.

"What is he going to do with the Hindenburg allegations? All institutions are compromised, and SEBI is compromised. The Election Commission was compromised earlier. PM could not address any genuine issue that country is facing today," he said.

National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) General Secretary and CPI leader Annie Raja also slammed the prime minister and questioned the idea of 'One Nation One Election'.

Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Manoj Jha said the prime minister has not realised that there is only one PM in the country, and those who voted for the opposition do not have a separate PM.

"The most important and concerning point is that even for the 11th time, Narendra Modi has failed to understand that he is the country's prime minister. The opposition, or the people who did not vote for you do not have a separate prime minister," Jha said.

The Rajya Sabha MP said, "Every time we expected him to have a big heart, we have been disappointed. Even a polite conversation can seem awkward if it is held impolitely. Whether the statement on Viksit Bharat, saying that some people want destruction, this is a political speech."

—PTI

Narendra Modi PHOTO: PTI

Flag not hoisted at Kejri's house

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita on Thursday said she was sad because the national flag could not be hoisted at the chief minister's residence because of his imprisonment. In a post on X, Sunita Kejriwal said that the "dictatorship" can put an elected chief minister in the jail but it cannot stop "patriotism" in his heart. AAP minister Atishi said Kejriwal was falsely framed. "Today is Independence Day, when India got freedom from British dictatorship in 1947. Hundreds of freedom fighters faced lathicharge, went to jail and sacrificed their lives – to get us this freedom.

—PTI

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi was seated with Olympians in the fifth row at Red Fort in New Delhi on Thursday. The Leader of Opposition has always been seated in the first row PHOTO: PTI

Seating RaGa in 5th row shows PM's pettiness: Cong

> I urge the Prime Minister once again to visit Manipur and impress upon both central and state governments to work towards a peaceful resolution at the earliest
>
> —Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

Congress on Thursday said that making Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi "sit in the fifth row" at the Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort shows Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "pettiness" and lack of respect for democratic traditions.

Opposition party's attack came after sources involved in organising of the event said all seating arrangements were done "as per the table of precedence". They said it was decided this year that "Paris Olympics medal winners" would be honoured as special guests at the Independence Day celebrations.

Congress Spokesperson Supriya Shrinate claimed that Prime Minister Modi is a person with a "petty mindset" and he keeps giving proof of that himself. *—PTI*

Will create 75K new medical seats: PM

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

In his first Independence Day address of his third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday

Noting that students spend lakhs and crores for medical education abroad, said the government will create 75,000 new medical seats in the next five years.

reiterated his push for ridding Indian politics of casteism and nepotism, calling for entry into public life of one lakh youngsters with no family ties to politics so that the fresh blood brings in a new mindset that enriches democracy. They can join any political party they want, he added.

Both a nationwide UCC and 'one nation one election' have been part of successive BJP's manifestos. While some BJP-ruled states are working to roll out a uniform civil code, the Centre has so far not taken any legislative measure for its implementation nationally.

The Law Commission had started consultations for it last year. A committee headed by former president Ram Nath Kovid had consulted political parties across the spectrum and submitted to the government its report, favouring simultaneous elections. Opposition parties had conveyed their strong objections to the concept.

Modi also cautioned citizens against those who cannot digest the country's rise, saying some people cannot think of India's welfare. The country will have to avoid these people who are sunk in the depth of despair, he added. Modi asserted that India's 140 crore citizens can achieve the goal of developed country if they walk shoulder to shoulder with a united resolve. *—PTI*

An all-women unit of BSF presents sweets to the women personnel of Border Guard Bangladesh on the 78th Independence Day, at the India-Bangladesh border, in Nadia district on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

Indo-Bangla women troops greet each other

NADIA , 15 AUG

An all-women unit of the Border Security Force (BSF) made a maiden gesture and handed over sweets and exchanged greetings with lady BGB personnel of Bangladesh at the front in West Bengal as part of the traditional Independence Day celebrations held along the international border.

The first-ever women border guards exchange took place near the Gede border post of the BSF in the said district even as a "high alert" continues all along this over 4,000 km front following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government less than a week back. The six-member BSF team, dressed in ceremonial regalia, belonged to the 32nd battalion deployed in the area to guard the international boundary in Nadia district. The personnel are of the constable rank, official said. *—PTI*

PM'S SPEECH MAPS INDIA'S LAST 10 YEARS, SAYS BJP

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said on Thursday Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day address has mapped India's transformation in the last 10 years of his government and outlined the steps to make it a global powerhouse.

In a post on X, Home Minister Amit Shah said Modi's address cast "a panoramic view of a radiant future on the horizon" and also instilled in Bharat the power of the unwavering belief that it can achieve the goal. BJP president JP Nadda said Modi's address reflected India's progress and future aspirations. *—PTI*

LEADERS SPEAK

> Future of Assam is not secure. The Hindu-Muslim population balance is declining fast. The Muslim population in 2021 rose to 41 per cent, while Hindus were down to 57 per cent.
>
> —Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM

> Manipur belongs to all 34 recognized tribes. Had it not been for 3 May, 2023 violence, the progress and development would have achieved now would be unimaginable. We are committed to working harder to make up for the lost time
>
> —N Biren Singh, Manipur CM

> Our founding fathers, brave personnel of the Jammu and Kashmir Police, the armed forces and the central armed police forces have ushered in peace, enabling the nation and the UT of J&K to fulfil the aspirations of the citizens and strengthen the ideals of social justice and equality
>
> —Manoj Sinha, Jammu Lieutenant Governor

> I am confident that the state will get back to its past glory and we are taking all possible measures to build the brand AP
>
> —Chandrababu Naidu, Andhra Pradesh CM

PARTY TO DECIDE WHETHER SON WILL CONTEST FROM BARAMATI: AJIT

PUNE, 15 AUG

Maharashtra deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday said it was for his party to decide whether his son Jay Pawar will contest from the Baramati Assembly constituency.

The NCP Chief, who has been representing the constituency in Pune district for the last many terms, also said he was "not interested" in contesting elections anymore.

But state NCP chief Sunil Tatkare later said Ajit did not say that he would not contest the coming Assembly elections.

Speaking to reporters, Ajit was replying to the question whether Jay will be fielded from Baramati as demanded by his supporters.

Notably, his elder son Parth Pawar had contested the Maval Lok Sabha seat in 2019 but lost by a heavy margin. *—PTI*

Kharge accuses BJP of spreading hate

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge Thursday attacked the BJP-led Centre, saying the rulers of today are encouraging divisive thinking and marking the 'Partition Horrors Remembrance Day' with the intention of spreading hatred.

In his address at the AICC headquarters here on the occasion of the 78th Independence Day, Kharge slammed the RSS, saying that the Sangh Parivar promoted Britishers' divide-and-rule policy for its own benefit.

"Unity in diversity is our strength and not a weakness. Some people propagate that we got independence easily but the truth is that lakhs of people made sacrifices, left their homes and even people from well-to-do families spent time in jails," he said. Instead of walking the path shown by them, the rulers of today are encouraging divisive thinking, he said.

"They mark Vibhajan Vibhishika Smriti Diwas with the intention of spreading hatred. Those who did not participate in the Independence movement give advice to the Congress party and without any contribution want to get counted among the martyrs," the Congress president said.

Narendra Modi government has been observing 14 August as the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day since 2021 in remembrance of those who lost their lives during partition. Kharge alleged, "It is a historical fact that their hate-filled politics resulted in the partition of the country. The partition happened because of them. For their own advantage, the Sangh Parivar promoted Britishers' divide-and-rule policy." *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

I-DAY CELEBRATIONS

A military helicopter showers flower petals during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on 78th Independence Day, in New Delhi, on Thursday; Sikhs perform 'Gatka' (traditional Sikh martial art) in Jalandhar; Artists perform at Vidhan Bhavan, in Lucknow; A Border Security Force personnel during the Beating Retreat ceremony at the India-Pakistan Attari-Wagah border post; Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangaswamy takes the salute during the 78th Independence Day celebrations, in Puducherry PHOTOS: PTI/ANI

An 80-year-old woman takes part in the midnight protest against the rape and murder of a trainee doctor inside the hospital premises, in Kolkata on Friday; Protesters outside RG Kar Medical College and Jadavpur University take part in 'Reclaim The Night' protest on the eve of Independence Day; People in News York's Time Square take part in the protest

PHOTOS: PTI/SCREENGRAB

WOMEN FILL STREETS TO 'RECLAIM THE NIGHT'

Following the rape of Kolkata doc, protesters took to the streets at midnight; violence took place in a few places

KOLKATA, 15 AUG

Thousands of women from all walks of life hit the streets across West Bengal at the stroke of midnight on Wednesday, protesting the horrific rape-murder of a doctor on duty at a Kolkata hospital last week.

Spurred by the 'Reclaim the Night' campaign, which gained momentum through social media, the protests began at 11:55 pm, aligning with Independence Day celebrations, and spread across key areas in both small towns and big cities, including several landmarks in Kolkata.

The protests were held at more than 100 locations across Kolkata and rallies took place in Patna, Delhi, Goa and other cities on Thursday.

However, the protests were marked by violence in some areas.

At Mandirtala in Howrah district, the scene of unrest continued as protestors seized control of a stage set up by the Trinamool Congress (TMC) for its 'Freedom at Midnight' celebrations. The agitators interrupted the event, turning the stage into a platform for their demands and amplifying their call for justice.

Unidentified miscreants vandalised the premises of the state-run hospital shortly after midnight protest ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

As night descended, the streets buzzed with chants of "We Want Justice," echoing the collective anger and sorrow of women from every corner - students, professionals, and homemakers - marching together to demand accountability and an end to violence against women.

Political party flags were banned, but flags from marginalised communities, such as LGBTQ+ groups, were proudly displayed.

Rimjhim Sinha, the movement's initiator, described the event as a new freedom struggle for women, symbolised by a viral poster of a red hand holding a crescent moon.

Over the last few days, the movement has spread to various towns and districts across Bengal, with initial gatherings planned for College Street, Academy of Fine Arts, and Jadavpur 8B Bus Stand in Kolkata. In Kolkata, the spirit of the protest was palpable.

At Biswa Bangla Gate in New Town, around 8,000 people, carrying candles and holding poignant posters, created a sea of light and determination.

Crowds gathered from Jadavpur 8B Bus Stand to College Square, from Naktala Nabapally to New Town Biswa Bangla Gate, from Behala Sakher Bazar to Shyambazar Five Point crossing, from Academy of Fine Arts to Nagerbazar, among others.

At Sealdah station, the protest saw an unexpected but heartening addition - pavement dwellers joined in - with some women blowing conch shells as a powerful symbol of resistance..

Nurses protested vandalism at the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on Thursday morning, hours after unidentified miscreants ransacked a part of the medical establishment.

—PTI

DOCTORS MEET WB GUV, SEEK HELP AFTER VANDALISM

KOLKATA, 15 AUG

A group of at least 20 doctors from various state-run medical establishments in Kolkata called on West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose on Thursday and sought his intervention after unidentified miscreants vandalised a portion of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, an official said.

The doctors, mostly women, also told Bose that they were feeling insecure.

Bose, the official said, has opened 'Abhaya Home' where doctors who are feeling insecure could stay "until they get back the confidence to move around freely in West Bengal".

The governor's office on Thursday morning also opened an 'Abhaya Portal' where any doctor or common people who are feeling distressed could call and seek assistance.

—PTI

IMA calls emergency meet amid attack on RG Kar Hospital

New Delhi, 15 Aug

The IMA Friday condemned the vandalism at the state-run medical college in Kolkata where doctors have been protesting the alleged rape and murder of a woman medic, and called for an emergency meeting with its state branches to decide on the future course of action. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) said the authorities have once again failed to maintain law and order when an all-important CBI investigation into the trainee woman doctor's alleged rape and murder is underway.

BJP demands Mamata's resignation

KOLKATA, 15 AUG

Demanding the resignation of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over vandalism at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, BJP said its women's wing will hold a candlelight rally to her residence on Friday in protest. Alleging that law and order has "failed" in the state, BJP state President Sukanta Majumdar said that the saffron party will also hold a sit-in demonstration near RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. He said that BJP's women's wing will hold a candlelight rally to Banerjee's south Kolkata residence at Kalighat.

PHOTO: PTI

Man dies in Jammu cloudburst, cities flooded

SRINAGAR, 15 AUG

A man died while three were injured in a cloudburst in the upper reaches of Kulgam district on Thursday, officials said here. Four people were injured when they were hit by a cloudburst in Bangward Bala in Kulgam district, they said. One of the injured, Mukhtar Ahmad Chouhan, succumbed later. A cloudburst in the Bandipora district of Jammu and Kashmir triggered a flash flood. The cloudburst was reported in Arin area of North Kashmir's Bandipora. The heavy rainfall caused widespread flooding, submerging many areas. Following the incident, locals gathered at the site, some holding umbrellas for protection. The Srinagar Meteorological Centre had issued an advisory earlier, forecasting light to moderate rainfall across Jammu and Kashmir. ***—PTI***

Himachal tunnel collapse to be probed

SHIMLA, 15 AUG

Taking cognisance of the landslide that occurred at the site of an under-construction tunnel on the Kaithlighat-Dhalli stretch of Kalka-Shimla four-lane project here in Himachal Pradesh, Deputy Commissioner Anupam Kashyap has ordered a magisterial probe into the matter, officials said on Thursday. A massive landslide occurred on Tuesday on the under-construction tunnel near Shimla, leading to the collapse of a portion of the tunnel, thus disrupting the construction work. No loss of life has been reported in the incident. The landslide took place near Chalaunti in the suburbs of Shimla when a part of the mountain under which a tunnel was being constructed fell on the entry point of the tunnel, resulting in the collapse of a part of the tunnel, officials said. ***—PTI***

ED attaches ₹678 cr assets of Avantha Group for bank fraud

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

Land assets worth more than Rs 678 crore of the Avantha Group have been attached under the anti-money laundering law as part of an alleged bank loan fraud linked probe, the Enforcement Directorate said Thursday.

A provisional order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) has been issued to attach the properties located in Haryana, Maharashtra and Uttarakhand.

The assets belong to various group companies of Avantha Group, "owned and controlled" by businessman Gautam Thapar.

It was found that advances to related parties and unrelated parties have been understated, certain assets have been provided as collateral, company was made a co-borrower and/or guarantor for enabling financing of loans which were immediately routed out of the company without due authorisation, it said.

This notice of the disclosure, as per the agency, was taken by the lender banks and on the basis of complaint made by the SBI, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a case in June 2021 against CG Power and Industrial Solution Ltd., Gautam Thapar, K N Neelkanth, Madhav Acharya, B Hariharan, Omkar Goswami and unknown public servant(s) and private person(s) in perpetuating a "bank fraud" on the consortium of banks to the tune of Rs 2,435 crore.

It was later detected that Rs 1,307.06 crore have been "diverted" to Avantha Group companies by availing loans, the ED said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

'GLITCH STOPS EXPLOSIONS'

ULFA-I claims to plant 24 bombs across Assam

GUWAHATI, 15 AUG

Banned militant group United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent, or ULFA-I, on Thursday claimed that it had planted bombs in at least 24 locations in Assam to "register an armed protest" during the Independence Day celebrations.

The bombs were supposed to explode between 6 am and 12 pm on Thursday, the organisation claimed in a statement. However, they did not explode due to a "technical error".

A senior police officer said bomb disposal squads have been rushed to all the places mentioned by ULFA (I) but there is no report of recovery of any bomb or explosive.

In an email purportedly from the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) (Independent) to media houses, including PTI, it gave a list identifying the exact location of 19 bombs and said locations of five more explosives could not be ascertained. It sought public cooperation in defusing the bombs.

When contacted, a senior officer at Assam Police headquarters told PTI that all the SPs of the districts, especially those mentioned in the list by the anti-peace talk faction of ULFA, have been alerted and asked to carry out a thorough search of the areas.

However, some local police officials in Nagaon, Lakhimpur and Sivasagar claimed that they have recovered some "bomb-like materials" from the spots.

Out of the 24 locations, eight places are in Guwahati. These include an open field at Last Gate in Dispur, near Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and other ministers' official residences.

Another place is the Satgaon road towards the Army cantonment in Narengi in Guwahati. Apart from these, Ashram Road, Panbazar, Jorabat, Bhetapara, Maligaon and Rajgarh in the capital city have also been mentioned as the spots of bombs. *—PTI*

Out of the 24 locations, eight places are in Guwahati ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

- Out of the 24 locations, eight places are in Guwahati. These include an open field at Last Gate in Dispur, near CM Himanta Biswa Sarma residences.

2 COACHES DETACH FROM MOVING TRAIN

SURAT, 15 AUG

Two coaches of Ahmedabad-Mumbai Double Decker Express got detached from the running train near Surat city in Gujarat on Thursday morning, officials said.

The incident took place at around 8.50 am when the train (number 12932) reached Gothangam yard between Sayan and Surat railway station, a release by the Western Railway (WR) said.

Nobody was injured in the incident and the affected coaches were later re-attached with the train, it said.

Immediately after the incident, restoration work was launched and Up trains were operated through the loop line, the WR said on X. Western Railway's chief public relations officer, Vineet Abhishek, said the movement of other trains on the route was not affected. The WR later announced that the restoration work has been completed and traffic on the UP main line resumed at 11.22 am. The Gothangam yard falls under the Vadodara division of the WR. *—PTI*

CM URGES KERALA TO MOVE ON FROM LANDSLIDE TRAGEDY

T'PURAM, 15 AUG

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said that while everyone in the country was sad regarding the Wayanad landslides that claimed over 300 lives, it was time to live and move forward for the survival of the state.

Vijayan, speaking after hoisting the national flag at the Central Stadium here on the occasion of the 78th Independence Day of the country, also said that even as India excelled in various sectors since its independence in 1947, the scientific awareness in the country was being damaged and superstitions, harmful customs, and outdated rituals were making a comeback.

Referring to the landslides in Wayanad, he said that Kerala and the country were celebrating the independence day in a time of grief following the disaster. He also said that despite the advances in science and technology, the country was still unable to predict natural disasters in advance and thereby, protect the life and property of the people. *—PTI*

WHAT IS MPOX & WHY HAS WHO DECLARED IT AN EMERGENCY?

Monkeypox is a viral disease that affects humans and animals. On Thursday, WHO declared it a global health emergency for the second time since 2022. It is similar to the smallpox. The virus was 1st identified in monkeys in 1958 in Denmark.

Caused by: Monkeypox virus, a species of Orthopoxvirus.

Symptoms

- Skin rash or mucosal lesions (lasts 2–4 weeks)
- Fever, chills, headache, muscle ache, back pain, low energy, fatigue, and swollen lymph nodes
- A pustule – which looks like a big white or yellow pimple – is a small, raised bump on the skin that is filled with pus

How does Mpox spread?

Contact with an infected animal, fluids or waste, or getting bitten or scratched by them

Direct skin-to-skin contact with mpox rash

Contact with saliva, upper respiratory secretions (snot, mucus), and bodily fluids or lesions around the anus or vagina from a person with mpox

Via all forms of sex

Hugging, massage, and kissing

Usual onset: 5 to 21 days post-exposure

Treatment

No specific treatment, supportive care can help manage symptoms. In severe cases, antiviral medications are given

Prevention: Smallpox and mpox vaccine

Countries affected

- Mpox was confined to Africa before 2022, However, after that there was a global outbreak, affecting 70 countries. Kerala saw India first case.
- 99,176 cases and 208 deaths recorded in 116 nation
- 27 cases in India so far

Research: Meena Kasi Visvanathan

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Bald Eagle Brigade personnel on the 78th Independence Day at the Rann of Kutch, in Kutch district, Gujarat
PHOTO: PTI

No country for daughters: Why rapes never stop

ANUSHREE CHAKRABORTY

The hospital authorities allegedly told the victim's parents that their daughter had died by suicide
PHOTO: PTI

On the eve of 78th Independence Day, the women of free India flooded the streets. They weren't celebrating. They were mourning. Rightly called 'Reclaim the Night', the protests saw girls as young as 12 years old out to claim their freedom, freedom from monsters. Monsters like the rapists who gangraped, maimed and killed a 31-year-old post-graduate trainee doctor who was found raped and murdered in the seminar hall of Kolkata's RG Kar Hospital.

She had gone to the room to rest after a 36-hour shift, just as all resident doctors do throughout the country amid gruelling long hours. When she was alone, resting in the hall, the rapists sexually assaulted her and left her to die. Autopsy report revealed horrific details – injuries all over her body, a broken neck and collar bone, bleeding eyes due to glass shards from her broken spectacles. One of her relatives told India Today that her legs were found 90 degrees apart, which is only possible if her pelvic girdle was broken. She was ripped apart by the rapists.

After her death, her family too was ripped apart, emotionally. The hospital authorities allegedly told victim's parents that their daughter had died by suicide. They made the parents wait in agony for three hours before they could see their child's body. Her inconsolable mother told reporters, "They killed my daughter, my only child. We worked hard so that she could become a doctor."

As it always happens in our country, the hospital director shamed and blamed the victim. He wondered what she was doing so late in the seminar hall alone. He was immediately sent on leave, only to be posted to another college. The seminar hall had no CCTV cameras. The crime scene underwent "renovation" immediately after the rape and murder. Of course, the authorities denied tampering with evidence. One suspect has been arrested, but will justice be served as the case slowly takes a political turn with a TMP-BJP-Congress face-off?

It's been almost 12 years since the Nirbhaya gangrape case in Delhi. The 23-year-old physiotherapy intern was gangraped by six men in a moving bus for over an hour. One of the rapists, a minor then, inserted a rod in her private part, ripping apart her intestine. There was national outrage then too, but has anything changed? This time, the victim was gangraped in the land that worships Goddess Durga.

India sees at least one rape every 16 minutes, so how can this monstrosity be curbed? And what is it that makes men rapists?

Is rape the result of a systemic patriarchal mindset or is it a diabolical power trip? Many studies suggest that it is a mix of both, with patriarchy being the foundation. It is the desire to make women feel small and powerless. For centuries, rape has been a weapon of war and oppression. The tragedy is that nothing has changed even in the age of Artificial Intelligence.

Pune-based Equal Community Foundation, which works with teenage boys from low-income households, says many boys believe that women who dress in Western wear are morally corrupt, and this mindset carries on into their adulthood. It also claims that 25 per cent of all men are likely to rape and an alarming 57 per cent are likely to justify violence against women.

Dr Neil Malamuth, psychology professor at University of California who surveyed 2,652 rapists, says they raped because they believed women are meant to be subjugated.

Rape culture deprives women of autonomy. Hell, even our streets belong to men after dark. Women are "advised" not to step out late at night, especially alone. If a woman gets raped when drunk, she is definitely at fault. If she's wearing a revealing dress, she is asking for it. Our society is in constant denial that if women want to "ask for it", they can and they will.

The great Indian tragedy is how boys are brought up. Sex education is a joke in our schools and as a result there is little knowledge of sexual consent. "Men will be men" is a common phrase at home and even in schools, as if justifying violence and dominance as characteristics of being masculine. Our largely patriarchal society teaches girls to be docile and to avoid "tantalising" men, but it normalises the male gaze. Little girls become aware of the male gaze even before hitting puberty. According to the United Nations, gender stereotypes are imprinted in a child's mind, where little girls are encouraged to play at home, but little boys are encouraged to play outside. While girls play with dolls, they are taught to be caregivers. But when boys play with toy guns, they learn aggression.

Of course, half of us would say, "not all men are rapists". Thing is, nobody in their right mind would call all men rapists, but how do we identify rapists? One of the men who raped the victim worked at the hospital and could have been known to her. What happened to her could happen to any of us. The victim was one of us. She worked hard to realise her dream of being a doctor. Her parents, like most middle-class families, gave it their all for their only daughter. The victim wanted to serve the society, but that very society's son snuffed out her life.

There is no certain way to know what makes men rape, but as a society we can curb sexual assaults by bringing up kind boys, who then grow up to be gentlemen who treat women with respect. Our public spaces, workplaces and even homes can only be safe for women when we as a society do better. If our country can get together to fight for its Independence, we can do the same to protect its women.

The writer is Managing Editor of Salar Digital English Daily

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SALAR سالار

A world-first law in Europe is targeting AI

A world-first law in Europe is targeting artificial intelligence. Other countries can learn from it

Around the world, governments are grappling with how best to manage the increasingly unruly beast that is Artificial Intelligence (AI).

This fast-growing technology promises to boost national economies and make completing menial tasks easier. But it also poses serious risks, such as AI-enabled crime and fraud, increased spread of misinformation and disinformation, increased public surveillance and further discrimination of already disadvantaged groups.

The European Union has taken a world-leading role in addressing these risks. In recent weeks, its Artificial Intelligence Act came into force.

This is the first law internationally designed to comprehensively manage AI risks – and Australia and other countries can learn much from it as they too try to ensure AI is safe and beneficial for everyone.

AI: a double edged sword

AI is already widespread in human society. It is the basis of the algorithms that recommend music, films and television shows on applications such as Spotify or Netflix. It is in cameras that identify people in airports and shopping malls. And it is increasingly used in hiring, education and healthcare services.

But AI is also being used for more troubling purposes. It can create deepfake images and videos, facilitate online scams, fuel massive surveillance and violate our privacy and human rights.

The EU Artificial Intelligence Act

The European Union's new AI law came into force on 1 August.

Crucially, it sets requirements for different AI systems based on the level of risk they pose. The more risk an AI system poses for health, safety or human rights of people, the stronger requirements it has to meet. The act contains a list of prohibited high-risk systems. This list includes AI systems that use subliminal techniques to manipulate individual decisions. It also includes unrestricted and real-life facial recognition systems used by by law enforcement authorities, similar to those currently used in China.

Other AI systems, such as those used by government authorities or in education and healthcare, are also considered high risk. Although these aren't prohibited, they must comply with many requirements.

For example, these systems must have their own risk management plan, be trained on quality data, meet accuracy, robustness and cybersecurity requirements and ensure a certain level of human oversight.

Other countries are following suit

The EU is not alone in taking action to tame the AI revolution.

Earlier this year the Council of Europe, an international human rights organisation with 46 member states, adopted the first international treaty requiring AI to respect human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Instead of a single law, the US government recently proposed a number of different laws addressing different AI systems in various sectors.

Australia can learn – and lead

In Australia, people are deeply concerned about AI, and steps are being taken to put necessary guardrails on the new technology.

Last year, the federal government ran a public consultation on safe and responsible AI in Australia. It then established an AI expert group which is currently working on the first proposed legislation on AI.

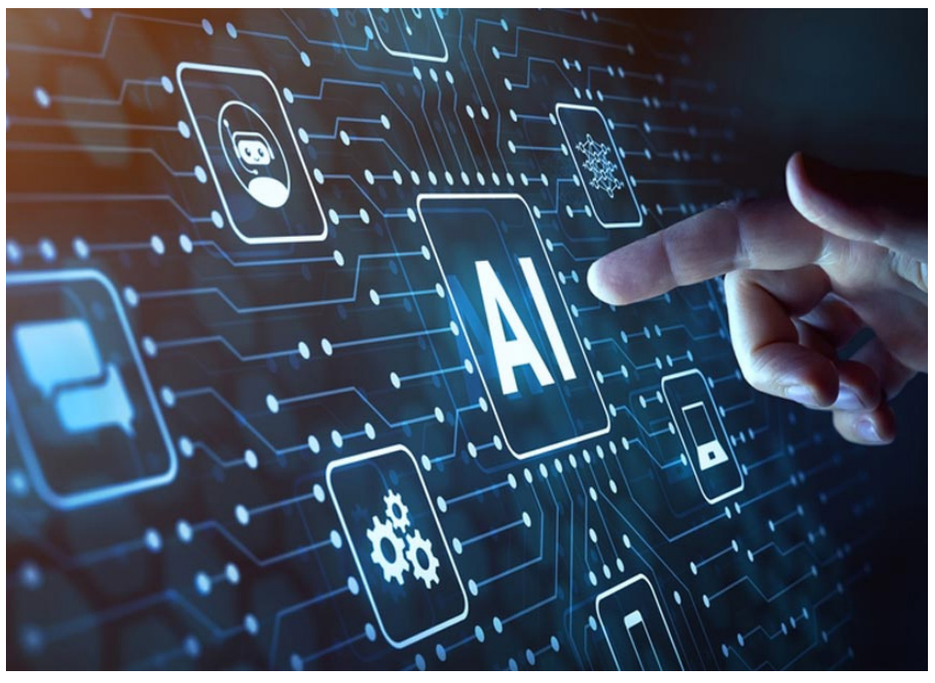
The government also plans to reform laws to address AI challenges in healthcare, consumer protection and creative industries.

The risk-based approach to AI regulation, used by the EU and other countries, is a good start when thinking about how to regulate diverse AI technologies.

However, a single law on AI will never be able to address the complexities of the technology in specific industries. For example, AI use in healthcare will raise complex ethical and legal issues that will need to be addressed in specialised healthcare laws. A generic AI Act will not suffice.

Regulating diverse AI applications in various sectors is not an easy task, and there is still a long way to go before all countries have comprehensive and enforceable laws in place. Policymakers will have to join forces with industry and communities around Australia to ensure AI brings the promised benefits to the Australian society – without the harms.

—The Conversation



This is the first law internationally designed to manage AI risks – and Australia and other countries can learn much from it as they too try to ensure AI is safe and beneficial for everyone
PHOTO: FREEPIK

WHO declares mpox a global health emergency. What happens next?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared mpox a public health emergency of international concern, after rising cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the potential for further spread.

This now triggers a coordinated international response to an extraordinary event and the mobilisation of resources, such as vaccines and diagnostic testing, to curb the spread of this infectious disease.

But WHO has not declared mpox a pandemic. Rather, the measures it has triggered are designed to prevent it from becoming one.

What triggered this latest alert?

Mpox, once known as monkeypox, is a viral infection closely related to smallpox. Initial symptoms include a fever, headache, swelling of the lymph nodes and muscle ache. A typical rash follows, mainly on the face, hands and feet.

The spread of mpox through certain African countries led the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to declare earlier this week mpox a public health emergency of continental security. This is the first time the organisation has issued such an alert since it was established in 2017.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in central Africa has been particularly worrying for more than a year.

There are two types or clades of mpox. Clade II, which originates in west Africa, is less severe. It has a fatality rate of up to 1 per cent (in other words, roughly one in 100 are expected to die from it). But clade I, from central Africa, has a fatality rate of up to 10 per cent (up to one in ten die).

This compares to a 0.7 per cent fatality rate for the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is seeing large epidemics of the more deadly clade I mpox.

This is partly due to very low levels of immunity to the mpox virus, which is related to the virus that causes smallpox. Mass vaccination against smallpox ceased more than 40 years ago globally, resulting in minimal immunity in populations today against mpox.

The WHO designation announced this week relates to the clade I. Not only does this have a higher fatality rate, it has new mutations that enhance spread between people.

These changes, and the global lack of immunity to mpox, makes the world's population vulnerable to the virus.

WHO has not declared mpox a pandemic. Rather, the measures it has triggered are designed to prevent it from becoming one
PHOTO: WHO

There are two different epidemics

In 2022, an epidemic of mpox swept through non-endemic countries, including beyond Africa. This was a variant of clade II originating from Nigeria, called clade IIb. This was sexually transmitted, predominantly affecting men who have sex with men, and had a low fatality rate.

That epidemic peaked in 2022, with vaccines made available to people at risk in high-income countries, but there has been an uptick in 2024.

At the same time, large clade I epidemics were occurring in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but with far less attention.

Vaccines were not available there, even in 2023, when there were 14,626 cases and 654 deaths. Mortality was 4.5 per cent, and higher in children.

In fact, most cases and deaths in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been children. This means most transmission there is non-sexual and is likely to have occurred through close contact or respiratory aerosols.

However, in 2023 an outbreak in a non-endemic part of the country, South Kivu in the east, appeared to be by sexual transmission, indicating more than one epidemic and different transmission modes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By mid-2024, there were already more cases in the country than all of 2023 – more than 15,600 cases and 537 deaths.

Testing capacity is low in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, most cases are not confirmed by lab testing, and the data we have are from a small sample of genomic sequences from the Kamituga region of South Kivu.

Mpox is spreading internationally

In the past month, the virus has spread to countries that share a border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo – Rwanda and Burundi. It has also spread to other east African countries, such as Kenya and Uganda. None of these countries have had mpox cases previously.

In an interconnected, mobile world, cases may spread to other continents, as mpox did in 2018 from Nigeria to the United Kingdom and other countries.

We have vaccines, but not where they are needed

As the mpox virus and smallpox viruses are related (they are both orthopoxviruses), smallpox vaccines offer protection against mpox. These vaccines were used to control the 2022 clade IIb epidemic.

However, most of the world has never been vaccinated, and has no immunity to mpox.

The newer vaccine (called Jynneos in some countries and Imvamune or Imvanex in others) is effective. However, supplies are limited, and vaccine is scarce in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

What happens now?

Ultimately, a serious epidemic anywhere in the world is a concern for all of us, as it can spread globally through travel, as we saw with the Covid pandemic.

Controlling it at the source is the best measure, and WHO's latest declaration will help mobilise the required resources. Surveillance for spread of this more serious version of mpox is also essential, bearing in mind that many countries do not have the capacity for widespread testing. So we'll have to rely on "suspected cases", based on a clinical definition, to keep track of the epidemic.

Now, WHO will coordinate the global mpox response, focusing on equity in disease prevention and access to diagnostics and vaccines. It is up to individual countries to do their best to comply with the International Health Regulations, and the protocols for how such a global emergency are managed. Courtesy,

—The Conversation

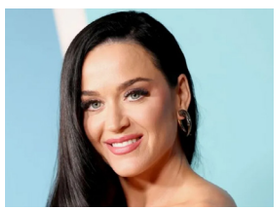


PHOTO: BBC

Spain probes Katy Perry's illegal music video

MADRID, 15 AUG

Spain is investigating the video of singer Katy Perry for her latest song, "Lifetimes", for the clips in which the 39-year-old American singer and songwriter appears jumping and running across dunes of the Ses Salines Natural Park, a protected area on the islands of Ibiza and Formentera, apparently without permission. The images taken on the dunes of the private islet of S'Espalmador, "one of the most ecologically valuable sites on the islands" and in an area cordoned off from the public with sticks and ropes, sparked the controversy, according to local media. The regional authorities have opened "preliminary investigation proceedings", after the production company failed to apply for the appropriate permits. *—AP*

UN team to visit B'desh to probe atrocities

This is the first time the UN is sending a fact-finding team since B'desh's independence

DHAKA, 15 AUG

A team of UN experts will visit Bangladesh next week to investigate the killings of the protesters ahead of and in the aftermath of Sheikh Hasina's resignation as the prime minister last week, it was announced on Thursday.

This will be the first time the UN is sending a fact-finding mission to Bangladesh since its independence in 1971 to investigate widespread human rights abuses in the country, according to a UN official, said a post on X by the Chief Adviser of the Government of Bangladesh.

Muhammad Yunus took oath as the Chief Adviser of the interim government on August 8, days after Sheikh Hasina's government collapsed and she fled to India on August 5 amid violent protests over quota reforms for government jobs.

"The United Nations is sending a UN fact-finding team next week to probe atrocities committed during the Student Revolution in July and early this month. UN human rights chief Volker Turk announced the move when he called Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus late Wednesday," the Chief Adviser of Government of Bangladesh said in a post on X, the handle for which is run by Yunus' office.

Sheikh Hasina PHOTO: PTI

- Bangladesh descended into chaos last week after Hasina's departure while the Army stepped in to fill the power vacuum on 5 August

Bangladesh descended into chaos last week after Hasina's departure while the Army stepped in to fill the power vacuum on 5 August. Before that, the anti-government protests had killed more than 500 people since mid-July.

Yunus said in a connecting post on X: The UN rights chief said a UN-led investigation will be launched very soon to probe the killing of the protesters during the Student Revolution.

Human rights will be the cornerstone of his administration and the protection of every citizen is the top most priority of the government, Yunus, who has sought UN cooperation to uphold human rights, said.

Probe starts against Hasina, 9 others for genocide

Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal has started an investigation against Hasina and nine others on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity that took place from 15 July to 5 August during students' mass movement against her government.

The Hasina-led Awami League along with its affiliated organisations is also named in the petition.

The petition was filed by Bulbul Kabir, the father of Arif Ahmed Siam, a Class IX student who was killed during the anti-discrimination student movement.

—PTI

Protesters gather at Shahbagh to prevent Awami League sabotage

DHAKA, 15 AUG

Students, Jamaat-Shibir activists, and other protesters gathered at Shahbagh in the capital from early morning to prevent Awami League leaders and activists, who were ousted from power by a mass student and public uprising, from carrying out any sabotage.

On Wednesday, Hasnat Abdullah, one of the coordinators of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, called on students and the public to unite to stop Awami League leaders and activists from engaging in terrorism and sabotage.

During a visit to Shahbagh around 9am, hundreds of Jamaat-Shibir activists were seen standing in front of the flower market. Another group was holding sporadic marches in front of the museum.

Some were also seen directing traffic on the roads and inspecting government and private vehicles.

Students shout slogans during a protest demanding the trial of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

Sarjis Alam, a key coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, issued a stern warning on Thursday against alleged attempts by the Awami League and its affiliates to incite a counter-uprising.

He emphasised the determination of the student-public alliance to defend the country, saying: "We will do whatever is necessary to steer this country in the right direction. Any attempt to destabilize the nation will be met with immediate resistance."

Sarjis also hinted at the possibility of demanding a ban on Awami League politics if the public supports such a move.

—Courtesy, Dhaka Tribune

3 ex-army officers taken into military custody in Pak

ISLAMABAD, 15 AUG

Three former Pakistan Army officers have been arrested by the military for their alleged connection with the court martial proceedings against former spymaster Lt Gen (retd.) Faiz Hameed, the army said on Thursday. Hameed, who served as director general of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) from 2019 to 2021, was arrested following action in the complaint of a private property developer over alleged misuse of official authority. According to a fresh statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) - the media wing of the army, three retired army officers were under military custody". "Further probes of certain retired officers for fomenting instability at the behest of and in collusion with vested political interests are continuing," it added *—AP*

Mediators hold Gaza ceasefire talks

DOHA, 15 AUG

A new round of peace talks aimed at ending the Gaza war started on Thursday, White House National Security spokesperson John Kirby said.

The United States, Qatar and Egypt met with an Israeli delegation in Qatar as the Palestinian death toll from the 10-month-old war climbed past 40,000, according to Gaza health authorities.

Hamas, which is not expected to participate directly, accuses Israel of adding new demands to a previous proposal that had US and international support and to which Hamas had agreed in principle.

Palestinian children stand at the site of an Israeli strike on a house, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict in central Gaza Strip PHOTO: ANI

A ceasefire in Gaza would likely calm tensions across the region. Diplomats hope it would persuade Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah to hold off on retaliating for the killing of a top Hezbollah commander in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut and of Hamas' top political leader in an explosion in Tehran.

The mediators have spent months trying to hammer out a three-phase plan in which Hamas would release scores of hostages captured in the 7 October attack that triggered the war in exchange for a lasting cease-fire, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Hamas has rejected Israel's latest demands, which include a lasting military presence along the border with Egypt and a line bisecting Gaza where it would search Palestinians returning to their homes to root out militants. Hamas spokesperson Osama Hamdan told The Associated Press the group is only interested in discussing the implementation of Biden's proposal and not in further negotiations over its content. *—AP*

Columbia varsity Prez resigns after Gaza protests turmoil

NEW YORK, 15 AUG

Columbia University President Minouche Shafik announced her resignation on Wednesday, reported CBS News.

The announcement comes months after she faced criticism for how she handled on-campus protests in reaction to the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Shafik made the announcement a month before the new semester starts. Columbia's fall semester begins 3 September. Katrina Armstrong has been named as the interim president.

The surge in protests across US campuses stemmed from heightened tensions following Hamas' attack on southern Israel on 7 October and the prolonged Israeli military campaign in Gaza. *—ANI*

'Iranian group seeks access to presidential campaigns'

NEW YORK, 15 AUG

PHOTO: IANS

Google has said that an Iranian group linked to the country's Revolutionary Guard has tried to infiltrate the personal email accounts of roughly a dozen people linked to President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump since May.

The tech company's threat intelligence arm on Wednesday said the group is still actively targeting people associated with Biden, Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, who replaced Biden as the Democratic candidate last month when he dropped out. It said those targeted have included current and former government officials, as well as presidential campaign affiliates.

The new report from Google's Threat Analysis Group affirms and expands on a Microsoft report released Friday that revealed suspected Iranian cyber intrusion in this year's US presidential election. Google's report said its threat researchers detected and disrupted a "small but steady cadence" of the Iranian attackers using email credential phishing, a type of cyberattack where the attacker poses as a trusted sender to try to get an email recipient to share their login details. The report said Google observed the group gaining access to one high-profile political consultant's personal Gmail account. Microsoft's Friday report had shared similar information, noting that the email account of a former senior adviser to a presidential campaign had been compromised and weaponised to send a phishing email to a high-ranking campaign official.

Trump's campaign said Saturday that it had been hacked. *—AP*

39 candidates contesting for SL presidential race

COLOMBO, 15 AUG

A total of 39 candidates, including three minority Tamils and two Buddhist monks, are in the fray for next month's presidential election in Sri Lanka, the election commission announced here on Thursday. However, there was not a single woman candidate among the 39 presidential aspirants for the 21 September election. In the last presidential election in 2019, there were 35 candidates while there were only six candidates in the first-ever presidential election held in October 1982. On the last day to file papers on Thursday, nominations were accepted from 9am to 11am local time after Wednesday's closure of paying deposits to the contest. *—PTI*

Belgian woman raped for 5 days in Pak

ISLAMABAD, 15 AUG

A Belgian woman was found with her hands tied on the streets of Islamabad on Wednesday. According to Pakistan media a man has been arrested in connection with the crime.

The woman was unable to produce any identification as she had no belongings with her.

Dawn reported that police officials told the outlet that they received information about a woman, who had been abandoned on the roadside in Sector G-6/1-3. When a police team reached the spot. She also gave investigators the registration number of a vehicle, and police questioned the owner of the car. Police also contacted the Belgian embassy, which had no record of such an individual travelling to Pakistan. *—Courtesy, Dawn*

A Belgian woman was found with her hands & feet tied in Pakistan's capital Islamabad PHOTO: @INCOGNITO_QFS

UKRAINIAN DRONE ATTACK DAMAGES 2 HANGARS

KYIV, 15 AUG

A Ukrainian drone attack on Russian air bases damaged at least two hangars and other areas, satellite images analyzed by The Associated Press on Thursday show.

Images taken Wednesday by Planet Labs PBC analyzed by the AP show that two hangars at Borisoglebsk Air Base had been struck, with a field of debris seen around both. It was not immediately clear what purpose the hangars served. There also appeared to be damage potentially done to two fighter aircraft at the base.

Separately, at Savasleika Air Base, one burn mark could be seen on the apron in images Wednesday, though there was no apparent damage visible to the fighter jets and other aircraft there. *—AP*

WASHINGTON, 15 AUG

As the Democratic National Convention approaches, a recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that Democrats have slightly higher trust in Vice President Kamala Harris' ability to address the issue of climate change than President Joe Biden.

The survey found that 85 per cent of Democrats have "a lot" or "some" trust in Harris to address climate change, while about three-quarters say the same about Biden. That's more true of Democrats under 45: about three-quarters of this group say they have "a lot" or "some" trust in Harris to handle climate issues, compared to about 6 in 10 who say that about Biden.

Older Democrats are more likely than younger ones to trust either Biden or Harris.. *—AP*

2 FRENCH FIGHTER PILOTS DIE AFTER WARPLANES COLLIDE

PARIS, 15 AUG

Two fighter jet pilots were killed after their Rafale warplane collided with another and crashed in northeastern France, according to the French military.

The two aircraft collided Wednesday during a combat maneuver in the Vosges region near the town of Colombey-les-Belles, the Defense Ministry said in a statement late in the day. The pilots who were killed were an instructor and a trainee on a training mission, it said.

Military and judicial investigations are underway into the causes of the accident. *—AP*

Climate activists protest at several German airports

BERLIN, 15 AUG

Climate activists staged protests at several German airports on Thursday, forcing a temporary halt to flights at some of them in the latest of a string of similar demonstrations. The Last Generation group said a total of eight activists were involved in the protests at Berlin, Cologne-Bonn, Nuremberg and Stuttgart airports, which started around 5 am. The group is demanding that the German government negotiate and sign an agreement on a global exit from the use of oil, gas and coal by 2030. Flights were suspended at Cologne-Bonn after two people were reported to have attached themselves to the asphalt, but later resumed, German news agency dpa reported. Police said a hole was found in an airport fence. Flights also were halted for about an hour at Nuremberg; and at Berlin Airport. *—AP*

FIRE RAGES ON

European Union satellite mapping agency says 104sq km of land was burned in Greece's Athens this week in a wildfire that gutted homes and prompted multiple countries to send assistance PHOTO: X/@ HAPPYSPACECAT

HURRICANE ERNESTO BATTERS PUERTO RICO

TOA BAJA, 15 AUG

Hurricane Ernesto dropped torrential rain on Puerto Rico and knocked out power for nearly half of all customers in the US territory on Wednesday as it threatened to strengthen into a major hurricane en route to Bermuda.

The storm was over open water about 1,085km south-southwest of Bermuda early Thursday, with maximum sustained winds of 85140kph and moving northwest at 26kph.

A hurricane watch was issued for Bermuda, where tropical storm conditions were possible on Friday and hurricane conditions were possible Saturday. Tropical storm warnings were discontinued for Puerto Rico and its outlying islands. *—AP*

HACKING ALERT

US social security numbers leaked

WASHINGTON DC, 15 AUG

A vicious gang of hackers might have stolen every American's Social Security number in a massive theft of personal information from a large data broker, which experts are calling 'a five-alarm wake-up call.'

Following the online heist, which took place four months ago, one of the hackers reportedly released most of the sensitive data on the dark web for free.

Now that this sensitive information - including Social Security numbers - has been disseminated, it is possible it will give rise to rampant identity theft, fraud, and various other crimes.

'If this in fact is pretty much the whole dossier on all of us, it certainly is much more concerning' Teresa Murray, a cybersecurity expert, said.

PHOTO: X@YAYAREANEWS

In April, a notorious gang of hackers known as the USDoD took credit for the theft of sensitive personal records of 2.9 billion people from National Public Data, which often provides personal information to employers, staffing agencies, and private investigators.

In a forum for hackers, the USDoD offered to sell the valuable data, which encompassed records of people from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

But last week, a putative member of the hacking gang, going by the name Felice, told the forum that they were offering 'the full NPD database.'

The hacker went on to claim that the database contained about 2.7 billion records, which came furnished with a person's full name, date of birth, and address.

The data broker also reportedly stated that they have 'purged the entire database, as a whole, of any and all entries, essentially opting everyone out.' Even though email addresses were noticeably absent from the hackers' database, ill-intentioned people could still do 'all kinds of things,' said Murray.

—Courtesy, Daily Mail

Disclose AI usage: Sebi to asset advisers, researchers

Sebi highlights use of AI in Research Analysis services

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has proposed that registered Investment Advisers and Research Analysts who employ artificial intelligence (AI) tools in their services must disclose the extent of usage to clients, emphasizing the importance of strong security measures to avoid unintended data exposure.

This transparency is crucial for clients to understand how AI tools contribute to their investment decisions and to make informed choices about their advisory services.

"The possibility of unintended data exposure highlights the need for strong security measures and clear disclosure to clients about the extent of AI tool usage", Trivesh D, COO at Tradejini, a stock trading platform, told PTI.

Sebi, in its consultation paper earlier this month, highlighted the growing usage of AI tools in Investment Adviser (IA) and Research Analyst (RA) services.

With technological innovations and advancements, many AI tools are currently available in chatbot form such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, etc. AI-based tools allow one to have human-like conversations and receive human-like responses with the chatbot. These tools assist various tasks such as summarising and analysing data and may help in improving efficiency and productivity.

Sebi said this transparency is crucial for clients to understand ***PHOTO: PTI***

- Securities and Exchange Board of India has proposed that registered Investment Advisers and Research Analysts who employ AI tools in their services must disclose the extent of usage to clients

"These AI tools, however, may not adequately safeguard sensitive data shared during conversations, potentially leading to unintended data exposure and concerns related to data security," Sebi said in its consultation paper issued last week.

Feroze Azeez, Deputy CEO, Anand Rathi Wealth Ltd said "while embracing this innovation, we must be mindful of its implications and responsibilities".

While AI tools can provide significant assistance in the work of IAs and RAs, they may not always give meaningful outputs that are expected to be based on the understanding of complex security-specific or client-specific scenarios/ requirements such as personal/ financial conditions or goals, Sebi stated.

"An IA/RA who uses AI tools for servicing its clients must provide complete disclosure of the extent of use of such tools to its prospective clients, to enable them to take informed decisions of continuance or otherwise with the IA/RA," Sebi suggested in the consultation paper.

Trivesh believes that technology can significantly enhance the efficiency and reach of investment advisory service but it should be used as a complementary tool rather than a complete replacement for human judgment and expertise. *—PTI*

Google's Gemini, an AI chatbot, supports more than 40 global languages including nine Indian languages ***PHOTO: PTI***

Google to expand AI initiatives in India

KOLKATA, 15 AUG

Google is intensifying its focus on India with the introduction of advanced AI tools aimed at breaking down language barriers and enhancing agricultural practices, a senior company official said.

Abhishek Bapna, Director of Product Management at Google DeepMind, highlighted the importance of reducing language barriers in India's economic development.

"Language is very essential for economic development. For instance, a language barrier should not hinder someone from explaining their medical issues to a doctor or accessing banking services," Bapna said during his short visit to IIM Calcutta.

The tech giant has launched Google Gemini, formerly known as Bard, an artificial intelligence chatbot that supports more than 40 global languages, including nine Indian languages.

Bapna added that Google's ongoing focus is on continuously improving language quality and expanding support for more Indian languages in the future.

Currently, the chatbot supports nine Indian languages - Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Bapna noted the complexity of India's multilingual environment, where people often use multiple languages simultaneously.

In a parallel effort to support India's agricultural sector, Google is working towards launching the Agricultural Landscape Understanding (ALU) Research API. This limited availability tool is designed to make agricultural practices more data-driven and efficient. *—PTI*

MSCI Inclusion may see $250M inflows in Adani Solutions

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

Shares of Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL) at last trading session on Wednesday jumped 3.8 per cent despite the flattish markets, as the street is expecting strong inflows by the end of August from the inclusion in the MSCI Index—inflows of USD 250 million according to brokerage houses. On Tuesday MSCI announced that it has lifted 'Embargo' on Adani Group stocks, which means the stock is eligible for inclusion in the MSCI India Index, after removing the group company last year in late January 2023, due to uncertainty over free-float. Lifting this restriction means that any recent changes in free float plus equity raises are eligible for inclusion. Furthermore, stocks that were excluded can be included again. Earlier in August, Adani group's power transmission, distribution and smart metering company completed a USD 1 billion QIP. *—PTI*

'Goa will be a venue for annual India Energy Week'

PANAJI, 15 AUG

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Thursday announced that the coastal state would serve as the permanent venue for the annual India Energy Week (IEW). Addressing the state on the occasion of 78th Independence Day, he said the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) has decided to host the annual IEWs in Goa permanently. Sawant also said his government was dedicated to creating a bright future for the state in the fields of green economy and blue economy. While the term 'green economy' refers to the economic system that aims at reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities, and that aims for sustainable development, 'blue economy' or the ocean economy, is a term used to describe the economic activities associated with the oceans, seas. *—PTI*

New Starbucks CEO to work remotely, to get $113 M

WASHINGTON, 15 AUG

Luring a CEO from another company to execute a turnaround is pretty expensive. Starbucks announced on Wednesday that it would offer new CEO Brian Niccol, 50, roughly $113 million in total compensation including a $10 million sign-on bonus, a $75 million equity grant, and, starting in fiscal 2025, a grant that could be worth $23 million per year. That's on top of Niccol's annual $1.6 million salary and an annual cash bonus that could range from $3.6 million to $7.2 million, depending on Niccol's performance. To boot, Niccol's offer letter states he won't be required to relocate to the company's headquarters in Seattle, although he agreed to commute from his residence as necessary. Chipotle Mexican Grill is headquartered in Newport Beach, Ca. Until he gets permanent secondary housing in Seattle, Starbucks agreed to cover the cost of any temporary housing arrangements and a personal chauffeur to drive Niccol around Seattle. *—Courtesy, Fortune*

Ola launches 3 e-bikes on Independence Day

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

Ola Electric, which has been in the news cycle for its much-awaited IPO, has unveiled three models of electric bikes - Roadster Pro, Roadster, and Roadster X, on the occasion of the country's Independence Day. Affirming its resolve to make India a global Electric Vehicles and new energy hub, Ola Electric today entered the electric motorcycle segment and further announced the integration of Ola's own batteries in its vehicles starting first quarter of the next financial year- from April 2025. The price points for Roadster Pro, which comes in two battery variants, have been kept at Rs 1,99,999 and Rs 2,49,999 per unit. Roadster Pro is powered by a motor with a peak power output of 52 kW and 105 Nm torque. *—ANI*

India's medicine exports gaining shares in US, Italy

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

With the government focusing on boosting domestic manufacturing of pharmaceutical products, India's medicine and antibiotics exports have started gaining significant market share in the US.

According to the commerce ministry data, India is the third largest import source of 'medicine put up for retail sale' for the US. The top two are Ireland and Switzerland.

In 2023, the country exported these medicines worth USD 9 billion as against 7.33 billion in 2022.

With this increase in the shipments, India's share went up to 13.1 per cent in 2023 from 10.08 per cent in 2022. Share of the top exporter Ireland fell to 13.85 per cent in 2023 from 17.18 per cent in 2022 because its sales in the US went down to USD 9.5 billion in 2023 from USD 12.5 billion in 2022.

The second biggest exporter Switzerland also saw its share decline to 13.7 per cent last year from 17.4 per cent in 2022.

Similarly, India has increased its share among exporters of antibiotics in the Italian market.

It is ranked 10th in that market by increasing its share to 2.12 per cent in 2023 from 0.96 per cent in 2022.

In value terms, the country's antibiotics exports to Italy stood at USD 23.34 million in 2023 as against USD 11.48 million in 2022.

Further the data showed that India's competitiveness is growing in the Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) apparatus market of Germany. In value terms, the country's antibiotics exports to Italy stood at USD 23.34 million in 2023 as against USD 11.48 million in 2022. *—PTI*

AMID WAR

India imports crude oil worth $2.8B from Russia in July

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

India, the world's third largest oil consuming and importing nation, in July bought USD 2.8 billion worth of crude oil from Russia, second only to China which remains the largest importer of Russian oil, a report said.

Russia emerged as India's biggest supplier of crude oil, which is converted into fuels like petrol and diesel in refineries, after Russian oil was available on discount following some European nations shunning purchases from Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Imports from Russia, which were less than one per cent of the total oil imported in pre-Ukraine war period, now make up for almost 40 per cent of India's total oil purchases.

PHOTO: PTI

China bought 47 per cent of Russia's crude exports, followed by India (37 per cent), the EU (7 per cent), and Turkey (6 per cent), the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said in a report.

Not just oil, but China and India also bought coal from Russia. "From 5 December 2022 until the end of July 2024, China purchased 45 per cent of all Russia's coal exports followed by India (18 per cent). Turkey (10 per cent), South Korea (10 per cent) and Taiwan (5 per cent) round off the top five buyers list," it said.

CREA however did not provide absolute numbers for imports. China was the largest buyer of Russian fossil fuels in July, accounting for 43 per cent (Euro 6.2 billion) of Russia's monthly export earnings from the top five importers. Crude oil comprised 63 per cent (Euro 3.9 billion) of China's imports from Russia. *—PTI*

FIRST INDIGENOUS SEMICONDUCTOR TO BE MADE IN GUJARAT

NADIAD, 15 AUG

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on Thursday said India's first indigenously developed semiconductor chip which is also known as integrated circuits will be manufactured in the state, which has so far attracted an investment of Rs 1 lakh crore in electronics and chip manufacturing sectors. He was addressing a gathering in Kheda district in the state after hoisting the national flag. "The 10th edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit held earlier this year was instrumental in attracting new investment in emerging sectors like AI and semiconductor," he said. India became the fifth largest economy under Narendra Modi and now the PM has resolved to make India the third largest economy. *—PTI*

Gold imports dip 4.23% to $12.64B in April-July

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

India's gold imports, which have a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), dipped by 4.23 per cent to USD 12.64 billion during April-July 2024-25 due to global economic uncertainties, according to government data.

The imports stood at USD 13.2 billion in April-July 2023.

In July alone, the imports declined by 10.65 per cent to USD 3.13 billion as against USD 3.5 billion in the same month last year. The inbound shipments were also in negative during June (-38.66 per cent) and May (-9.76 per cent).

In April, the imports jumped to USD 3.11 billion from one billion in April 2023.

According to a jeweller, the high prices are discouraging the imports but it will go up from September as festive season will start in India and the import duty cut benefit is also there. The government has slashed the customs duty on gold and silver to 6 per cent from 15 per cent.

PHOTO: PTI

- India's gold imports, which have a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), dipped by 4.23 per cent to USD 12.64

Gold prices rose Rs 300 to Rs 73,150 per 10 grams in the national capital on August 14 amid a jump in precious metal rates in the international markets. In 2023-24, India's gold imports surged by 30 per cent to USD 45.54 billion.

Switzerland is the largest source of gold imports, with about 40 per cent share, followed by the UAE (over 16 per cent) and South Africa (about 10 per cent). *—PTI*

Indian investors struggle to access reliable data: Deloitte

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

More than 90 per cent of Indian institutional investors now consider sustainability information essential in their due diligence process, a study by Deloitte and The Fletcher School at Tufts University said, adding as sustainability becomes more integral to investment management, trust in the ESG data used to inform these decisions is lacking, posing challenges in accessing trustworthy data. "According to Indian investors, the inconsistency or incomparability of ESG rating data (73 per cent), cost constraints on integrating ESG data into investment decision models (71 per cent) and lack of measurable outcomes in corporate disclosures (70 per cent) reduce the trust factor of available sustainability data, inhibiting their ability to implement ESG investment strategies," Deloitte said citing its study titled 'Investor trust in sustainability data'. *—PTI*

Nifty's rise from 11,000 to 25,000 echoes economic growth: Experts

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

As the nation celebrates its 78th Independence Day, it reflects on a journey marked by numerous challenges and fluctuations. Similarly, the country's stock markets have experienced their own ups and downs but have shown significant growth and resilience.

The Nifty 50 index began on 22 April, 1996, with a starting value of 1136.28 points and has recently crossed 25,000 points, marking a growth of nearly 22 times. In less than four years from its inception, as the country transitioned into the 21st century, the index climbed to 1592.90 points, showcasing early signs of its potential. By 2 December, 2004, just before the start of 2005, the Nifty 50 achieved a historic milestone by crossing the 2,000-point mark, setting the stage for further growth amid challenges.

In 2024, the index was around 6,300 points ***PHOTO: PTI***

The global financial crisis of 2008 tested the resilience of the Indian stock market. At the start of the year, the Nifty 50 was trading around 6300 points, but by the end of 2008, it had plummeted to 2500 points, reflecting the global economic turmoil. Despite this setback, India's financial sector demonstrated remarkable strength. By 31 December, 2009, less than a year after the crisis, the Nifty 50 had rebounded to 5200 points.

In September 2010, the Nifty index again reached the 6000-point mark after a gap of over two years, marking a significant recovery. As 2014 began, the index was around 6,300 points, but by the end of the year, it had surged past 8000 points, fuelled by optimism surrounding the new single-party majority government at the centre. *—ANI*

SHIFTING TO AI

Cisco announces layoffs of 7% of workforce

SAN JOSE, 15 AUG

Cisco Systems is planning to lay off 7% of its employees, its second round of job cuts this year, as the company shifts its focus to more rapidly growing areas in technology, such as artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.

The company based in San Jose, California, did not specify the number of jobs it is cutting. It had 84,900 employees as of July 2023. Based on that figure, the number of jobs cut would be about 5,900. In February, Cisco announced it would cut about 4,000 jobs.

The networking equipment maker said in June that it would invest $1 billion in tech startups like Cohere, Mistral and Scale to develop reliable AI products. It recently also announced a partnership with Nvidia to develop infrastructure for AI systems.

Cisco's layoffs come just two weeks after chipmaker Intel Corp announced it would cut about 15,000 jobs as it tries to turn its business around to compete with more successful rivals like Nvidia and AMD. Intel's quarterly earnings report disappointed investors and its stock took a nosedive following the announcement. In contrast, Cisco's shares were up about 6% after-hours on Wednesday.

This will be their second round of job cuts ***PHOTO: CISCO SYSTEMS***

- Cisco Systems is planning to lay off 7% of its employees, its second round of job cuts this year, as the company shifts its focus to more rapidly growing areas in technology, such as artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.

isco Systems Inc said Wednesday it earned $2.16 billion, or 54 cents per share, in its fiscal fourth quarter that ended on July 27, down 45% from $3.96 billion, or 97 cents per share, in the same period a year ago. Excluding special items, its adjusted earnings were 87 cents per share in the latest quarter. *—AP*

Cognizant gives hikes as low as 1% to its employees

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

Cognizant Technology Solutions has reportedly handed out annual salary hikes as low as 1 per cent to some of its staff amid controversy of offering decade-low pay packages to its freshers

It is reported that the hikes are as low as 1 per cent and the highest is 5 per cent.

On the condition of anonymity, the people who are aware of the developments revealed that for a rating of 3, the hike is around 1-3 per cent and a 4 rating was given 4 per cent hike while a 5 rating employee was paid around 4.5 per cent.

In April 2023, the Nasdaq-listed company granted hikes ranging from 7 per cent to 11 per cent to its employees.

The Cognizant's thin hikes comes at a time when the company is under criticism for offering low starting salaries of Rs 2.52 lakh per annum, or around Rs 21,000 a month to freshers. This development has irked netizens on social media platforms. Cognizant has not responded over the hiring drive. The company has around 254,000 employees, or about 70 per cent of its total headcount, across the country. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: XV

Chennaiyin FC signs left-back Vignesh for 4-year

CHENNAI, 15 AUG

Chennaiyin FC have completed the signing of 26-year-old defender Vignesh Dakshinamurthy on a four-year deal, the club said on Thursday. Primarily a left-back, Vignesh has also played in midfield and adds versatility and experience to the Chennaiyin backline. He becomes the club's 12th signing of the summer, joining the likes of Mandar Rao Desai and PC Laldinpuia. Welcoming Vignesh into the club, head coach Owen Coyle said: "Delighted to sign another talented young Indian player who has already shown fantastic ability in the ISL. We faced a lot of competition from other clubs to sign him. Vignesh is a great addition to our squad and we look forward to working with him." *—PTI*

ManU captain Fernandes signs contract until 2027

MANCHESTER, 15 AUG

Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes has signed a new contract that will keep him at Old Trafford until June 2027. The Portugal midfielder has been a key figure for the Red Devils since his arrival in January 2020, scoring 79 goals in his 234 appearances. United announced the new deal, which includes an option for a further year, on Wednesday. It comes after speculation at the end of last season that Fernandes could leave the club this summer. "Everybody knows the passion I have for Manchester United," the 29-year-old Fernandes said. "I understand the responsibility and significance of wearing this shirt, and the levels of dedication and desire required to represent this incredible club. "But I wouldn't have signed this contract if I didn't believe that my best moments in a United shirt are still to come." *—AP*

Laxman may extend his term as head of Nat'l Cricket Board

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

Former India cricketer VVS Laxman is set to extend his term as the head of the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru by at least a year according to ESPNcricinfo. Laxman became the head of the NCA in December 2021 for a period of three years. His contract was set to expire in September this year. According to ESPNcricinfo, an Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise was looking to acquire Laxman's services, which was not possible because of the duties that he has to look after as the NCA head. Laxman is likely to be supported by India's stalwart domestic players as his team of coaches including Shitanshu Kotak, Sairaj Bahutule and Hrishikesh Kanitkar. *—ANI*

Akshay Sharma builds two-shot lead with 65 in R2

COIMBATORE, 15 AUG

Chandigarh golfer Akshay Sharma built a two-shot lead with a flawless seven-under 65 in round two of the Rs 1 crore Coimbatore Open at the Coimbatore Golf Club here on Thursday. Akshay who had carded a 69 in round one, sat on top of the pack at a total of 10-under 134. Gurugram's Manu Gandas (71-65) occupied the second place after he too returned an error-free 65. Dubai-based rookie Rayhan Thomas, playing his first event on the PGTI, posted a 67 on day two to be tied for third at a total score of seven-under 137 along with another rookie Shaurya Bhattacharya (71) of Delhi. The 24-year-old Rayhan also had a bogey-free day. The cut was declared at two-over. Sixty-one professionals made the cut for the money rounds. The two-time winner on the PGTI then set up a tap-in for birdie on the par-3 fourth where he struck an excellent tee shot. *—PTI*

She is a champion: Sporting fraternity on Vinesh Phogat

CAS rejects Vinesh's plea for a joint Silver

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

The Indian sporting fraternity reacted with disappointment at the Court of Arbitration for Sport's (CAS) verdict rejecting wrestler Vinesh Phogat's appeal against her Olympic disqualification but said she will remain a champion for them.

The ad-hoc division of the CAS on Wednesday rejected Vinesh's appeal against a gut-wrenching disqualification from the Paris Olympics 50kg final for being 100gm overweight, which dashed any hopes of securing a belated silver medal.

"It's disappointing but we can't do anything about that," hockey legend PR Sreejesh, who retired after inspiring the Indian team to a second consecutive Olympic bronze medal in the Paris Games, told PTI Videos.

Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Bajrang Punia said a medal has been snatched away from Vinesh.

"World champion pride of Hindustan, Rustam-e-Hind Vinesh Phogat, you are the Kohinoor of the country. It's Vinesh Phogat all over the world. Those who want medals, can buy them for Rs 15 each," he wrote with a picture of Vinesh wearing several medals.

The 29-year-old Vinesh was disqualified on the morning of the women's 50kg freestyle final last week. In her appeal, Vinesh had demanded that she be given a joint silver with Cuban wrestler Yusneylis Guzman Lopez, who lost to her in the semifinals but was promoted to the summit clash following the Indian's disqualification.

National wrestling coach Virendra Dahiya termed the CAS decision "unfortunate".

Indian Olympic Association President PT Usha had also expressed "shock and disappointment" at the turn of events. *—PTI*

Wrestler Vinesh Phogat
PHOTO: PTI

MODI MEETS INDIAN CONTINGENT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with bronze medalist Indian Hockey team during his interaction with the Indian contingent for Paris Olympics, in New Delhi on Thursday. Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Raksha Nikhil Khadse were also present during the meeting. India ended its campaign at the Paris Olympics with six medals, including five bronze and a silver. The men's hockey team won back-to-back bronze medals for the first time in 52 years at the Olympics following their 2-1 triumph over Spain. Asserting that India has the ability to stage large-scale global events, Modi on said the country is leaving no stone unturned in its efforts to host the Olympics in 2036 ***PHOTO: PTI***

'We need to score more field goals for Olympic medals'

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

If there is one thing that goalkeeping stalwart PR Sreejesh would like to see change in Indian hockey, it is the team's dependence on penalty corners for scoring as he believes that field goals need to go up for the country to win an Olympic medal every four years.

India scored 15 goals and conceded 12 en route their second consecutive Olympic bronze medal in the just-concluded Paris Games. Out of 15, nine were penalty corners, three were penalty strokes and a mere three were field goals.

"Most the times, when the forwards are getting into the circle the first thing that comes into their mind is to go for a penalty corner because that's what we are good at. I am not saying that our forwards are not trying to score field goals," Sreejesh, who retired at the end of the Games, told PTI editors at its headquarters in an interaction.

In all, the men's competition in Paris witnessed 78 field goals and 62 from short corners in total. A penalty corner is awarded when a player commits a foul within the striking circle even if it is not necessarily to stop a possible goal-scoring move. The most common cause for a penalty corner is the ball touching a player's feet in the circle.

"I strongly believe that we made some mistakes and conceded a few goals but we need to sharpen our forwards to score more goals so that the defence gets more comfort," the 36-year-old added. *—PTI*

Sehrawat gets railways promotion

NEW DELHI, 15 AUG

The Northern Railways on Wednesday promoted wrestler Aman Sehrawat, who won a bronze medal at the Paris Olympics, to the post of officer On Special Duty (OSD), an official said. Sehrawat bagged the bronze medal in the 57kg freestyle category, becoming India's youngest ever Olympic medallist at 21. "General Manager Shri Shobhan Chaudhuri presented a token of appreciation to the Olympian for winning the bronze medal in the Paris Olympics 2024. *—PTI*

PGA releases 2025 schedule without LIV Golf in sight

MEMPHIS, 15 AUG

The PGA Tour released its 2025 schedule with no real surprises and every indication the tour and Saudi-backed LIV Golf will be going their separate ways at least until 2026.

PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan said talks with the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia are "complicated discussions" but that the sides continue to meet as they try to work out a deal for an investment with the commercial PGA Tour Enterprises.

"As it relates to times and timeframes and where we are, I'd just say that we're in a good place with the conversations," he said. "That's the most important thing."

Asked if the release of the 2025 schedule suggested there would be no involvement with LIV through 2026 or 2027, Monahan replied, "That's fair."

The only real change in the schedule was putting the Memorial and the RBC Canadian Open back to where they were previously — the Memorial on 29 May through 1 June, followed by the Canadian Open and then the US Open at Oakmont.

The Memorial was the week before the US Open — a week after Memorial Day — and Memorial host Jack Nicklaus expressed his displeasure. *—AP*

Mbappe scores on debut; Madrid win UEFA Super Cup

WARSAW, 15 AUG

A goal and a trophy. How about that for a debut by Kylian Mbappe for Real Madrid? The France captain pulled on the famous white jersey of the Spanish champions for the first time in a competitive match and marked the occasion with the second goal in a 2-0 win over Atalanta in the UEFA Super Cup. Mbappe, who started and played 82 minutes at the National Stadium in Warsaw, met a pass from Jude Bellingham across the area with a shot into the top corner in the 68th minute.

"It's a big step for him – people have been talking about him coming here for a long time — and it feels like he's been here for a while."

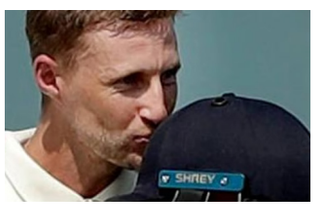
After putting both arms across his chest for his trademark celebration, Mbappé was congratulated by Vinícius Júnior and Rodrygo, the other members of Madrid's star-studded strike force that might be sending tremors around European soccer heading into the new season.

Federico Valverde tapped home a cross from Vinícius in the 59th to set Madrid on its way to a record sixth victory in the Super Cup, the annual match between the Champions League winners (Madrid) and the Europa League champions. *—AP*

Real Madrid players celebrate after winning the UEFA Super Cup on Thursday in Poland ***PHOTO: X/ @REALMADRID***

Kylian Mbappe

Root could surpass Sachin's Test record: Ponting



Joe Root ***PHOTO: X***

DUBAI, 15 AUG

Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting reckoned that Joe Root could surpass batting legend Sachin Tendulkar's tally of runs in Test cricket, provided the England batting mainstay stays 'hungry' and keeps scoring at a consistent rate for the next four years.

Root became only the seventh batter in the history of the conventional format to cross the 12,000-run mark — a feat he achieved recently during the Edgbaston Test against the West Indies.

With 12,027 runs in 143 Tests at 50.11 with 32 centuries and 63 fifties so far, Root is also overall the seventh highest run-scorer in Tests and could overtake Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara (12,400 runs) and his former teammate Alastair Cook (12,472) soon.

Tendulkar leads the table with 15921 runs from 200 Tests. *—PTI*

A RARE SIDE

Grand chess tour: Praggnanandhaa finishes last in rapid section

SAINT LOUIS, 15 AUG

Indian grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa had a rare bad in the office, finishing at the bottom of the table in the rapid section of Saint Louis Rapid and blitz chess tournament here.

Having lost three and drawn three coming into the third and final day of rapid competition, Praggnanadhaa lost to Lenier Dominguez of the United States in the seventh round. Another American Hikaru Nakamura also proved too stronger for the Indian in the final game.

In in the eighth round, the Indian played out a draw with Alireza Firouzja of France to finish his event at a disappointing four points out of a possible 18.

R Praggnanandhaa ***PHOTO: PTI***

Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia and French duo of Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Firouzja were tied for the top spot on 11 points each in what was one of the closely contested rapid section of the Grand Chess tour.

The three leaders at this point are followed by Armenian-turned-American Levon Aronian, a full point behind, and USA's Wesley So, Dominguez and Nakamura, who share the fifth on nine points apiece.

While Praggnanandhaa is safe on the third spot in the tour rankings for now, an improved performance in blitz might just help the Indian to go ahead of his nearest rival and compatriot D Gukesh, who is currently fourth and will join the others in the Sinquefield Cup, slated to take place right after this event. *—PTI*

EPL Opener: Totham suspends Yves Bissouma

LONDON, 15 AUG

Tottenham midfielder Yves Bissouma will miss the start of the Premier League season after being suspended by the club following an investigation into footage showing him appearing to inhale nitrous oxide, or laughing gas.

Bissouma uploaded clips of himself using nitrous oxide, which is now a Class C drug according to British law, onto social media site Snapchat last weekend. The Mali international has apologised. "He is a footballer of this club — he has responsibilities to the club, to his teammates, to our supporters, to everyone associated with the club, and he has failed in those duties," Tottenham manager said. *—AP*

Swiatek, Sinner advance in Cincinnati Open

Iga Swiatek ***PHOTO: X***

Jannik Sinner ***PHOTO: BRITANNICA***

MASON, 15 AUG

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek survived in her return to hard courts in the Cincinnati Open, outlasting Varvara Gracheva 6-0, 6-7 (8), 6-2.

Playing for the first time since finishing third for Poland in the Paris Olympics, Swiatek set up a third-round match against Marta Kostyuk — a 6-3, 7-5 winner over Lulu Sun.

Swiatek won her third straight French Open title in May and has six WTA Tour victories this season.

On the men's side in the U.S. Open tuneup event, top-ranked Jannik Sinner got past American Alex Michelsen 6-4, 7-5 in his first match.

In the late match, Jiri Lehecka upset fourth-seeded Daniil Medvedev 7-6 (2), 6-4.

Earlier in women's play, 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva beat 11th seeded Emma Navarro 6-2, 6-2. Andreeva was playing her first match since taking a silver medal in doubles in Paris.

"I just went out there, tried to show my best level, and tried to win a match, and I think I did it," Andreeva said. Andreeva will face 2016 Cincinnati champion Karolina Pliskova.

Toronto semifinalist Diana Shnaider of Russia, Andreeva's doubles partner in Paris, beat Zhang Shuai 6-1, 6-4. Sinner improved to 25-2 on hard courts this season and advanced to a third-round meeting with Australia's Jordan Thompson. Sinner is trying to reach the quarterfinals in Cincinnati for the first time.

Stefanos Tsitsipas, in his first tournament since announcing he would no longer be coached by his father, rallied to beat Jan-Lennard Struff 4-6, 6-4, 6-3. *—AP*